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Damning report into council department by Ofsted

FAILINGS OVER CHILD SERVICES

Report by David Cosgrove

DUDLEY Council's children's services department has been branded 'inadequate' in a damning report by Ofsted inspectors.

The report, released this week, says the service, which includes adoption, fostering and child protection services, and the local safeguarding children's board – is failing the borough's youngsters.

This follows an inspection by the watchdog in January and February. A Government commissioner will be brought in to help run the department for the next three months.

Council chief executive Sarah Norman admitted the report highlighted 'serious and widespread failures in services provided to children and young people in Dudley'.

Ukip group leader Paul Brothwood blasted the 'systemic failures' at the heart of children's services. He said: 'Time and time again my group have raised their concerns about children's services across the borough.'

Widespread

'For our borough to move forward the controlling Labour group must be held to account for these long systemic failures. On nearly every level the council has come out as inadequate. These failures are long-standing and show serious widespread faults.'

In a 2011 inspection, Dudley's children's services was rated as 'adequate' overall. However, bosses had recognised recent failings in the system after the council's own assessment of the service flagged up long-standing issues.

An improvement board was set up in September and chiefs said the authority has moved to make things better.

'While the report acknowledges these efforts, it also confirms it will take time to see the benefits of the work.'

Sarah Norman said: 'We fully accept Ofsted's findings and the inspection has confirmed our own self-assessment of the services and we will continue at pace to rectify the issues.'

'We have acted quickly over the last 12 months to drive forward these changes and we are pleased the report confirms 'strong leadership' is now in place.'

'Nevertheless, overall, Ofsted concluded there are serious and widespread failures in services provided to children and young people in Dudley.'

'We have already appointed Liz Murphy as the new chairperson of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.'

PIERS-ING SENSE OF HUMOUR OVER WHEEL JIBES



Len Lenihan and Harry Jones wear Piers Morgan masks to ride the DY Eye following the journalist's criticism

DUDLEY residents played the fool to promote their latest under-fire attraction.

Dozens donned Piers Morgan masks to ride the DY Eye on April Fools Day. It followed criticism of the Ferris wheel from the journalist and presenter.

The protest was organised to show The Good Morning Britain host that the people of Dudley had a sense of humour.

Morgan had sparked controversy by saying he could think of 'no grimmer view panorama than Dudley'.

He was invited to see the sights for himself,

but declined. Ride operators say the attraction has been popular with locals and anyone who went along to the attraction on Friday morning wearing a mask got a free ride.

Dave Carter, Arcade Toy Shop owner, said: 'The idea has been to poke a bit of fun back at Piers Morgan about his comments made, to prove the people of Dudley have a sense of humour.'

'Around 7,000 people have already ridden the attraction, which is well on the way to achieving the target of 10,000 when the ride gets dismantled. The attraction brings more

people into the town which is great for business.'

There are now talks to bring the wheel in next year. Steve Edwards, organiser of The Only Way Is Dudley, said: 'The town centre is an integral part of Dudley, it is one of the oldest market places in the country.'

'When people go to visit the zoo, castle and museum, they can also come to the wheel and then so a bit of shopping around the town.'

Operator Harry Jones said: 'The ride has been as popular in Dudley as anywhere else.'

• **Blessing – Page 9**

CAMPAIGN

Call for inquiry over safety on the roads

A SEDGLEY campaign group has secured an independent investigation into road safety conditions.

The Northway Action Group for Road Safety has for several years campaigned for Dudley Council to review Northway following residents' safety fears.

Now transport consultants Mott MacDonald have been commissioned to prepare an independent report into the road. Councillor Hilary Bills added: 'We now feel it best to take a step back and let this outside company help them more.'

COMEDY

TV star Nathan is top of the bill

A STAR of TV's Live At The Apollo and Mock The Week will headline a comedy night in Stourbridge tomorrow night (Friday).

Nathan Caton tops the bill at Fitz of Laughter Comedy Club, in the marquee downstairs at Katie Fitzgerald's in Enville Street, Wollaston.

Also on the bill are Andrew Bird and Anthony Brown, who appeared in Peter Kay's Phoenix Nights.

Wayne Beese is resident compere. Doors open at 8pm and tickets are £10.

LEGACY

Fundraising vow as Ivan loses fight

AN inspirational cancer sufferer has lost his battle against the disease – after vowed to raise as much money as he could for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Company director Ivan Partridge, aged 55, of Quarry Bank, was diagnosed last year with a rare form of melanoma, prompting him to require major facial surgery.

Mr Partridge had been admitted to the hospice over the last fortnight and offered revolutionary treatment. He had vowed to raise money for the Stourbridge-based charity. Only last week, The Chronicle reported on his fundraising efforts.

• **Courageous – Page 6**

INSIDE:

RELOCATION OF WAR MEMORIAL



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School could make way for homes

AN historic former school and council building could be demolished to make way for homes – to the anger of heritage groups desperate to save it.

If plans are passed, the Claughton Centre in Dudley, formerly the Sir Gilbert Claughton School, will be flattened and the land made available for a housing development.

The school closed in 1990 and was taken over by Dudley Council which renamed it the Claughton Centre and used it as offices.

Developers see the site, in Blower's Green Road, as an opportunity to get rid of disused buildings and create much-needed homes but heritage groups have objected, saying it will result in a im-

portant building being wiped out. Save Britain's Heritage and The Victorian Society have both raised concerns with Dudley Council.

Around 56 homes would be built on the site, which falls within a regeneration corridor where council bosses are keen to see disused employment sites redeveloped for housing.

An outline application has been recommended for approval by Dudley Council officers with councillors expected to make a final decision this week.

But the groups remain hopeful the building can be saved. In its letter of objection, Save Britain's Heritage said: "The Claughton Centre is a 1904 Edwardian school building of architectural

merit, built to designs of Barrowcliff and Allcock, a Loughborough firm with several listed buildings to their name.

"It is built of red brick with buff terracotta detailing, in the Jacobean style, and is an attractive building worthy of retention and re-use."

The Victorian Society said: "We are not persuaded by the argument that the building cannot be adapted for another use which may include residential. We consider that the building forms an important part of the townscape on a major approach road to Dudley town centre.

"We strongly object to the demolition of this building and to this application as presented."

Praise from inspectors over adult education

ADULT learning in Dudley has received a glowing report from Ofsted with many areas highlighted as good or excellent.

Inspectors from Ofsted visited in March and found that services overall were good and highlighted areas of excellence.

More than 6,000 people sign up to adult learner courses run by Dudley Council each year.

The inspectors found that managers and tutors were working effectively to provide learning opportunities for priority groups of learners and that a wide variety of courses are available including courses that lead to recognised qualifications.

Flourish

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "We're pleased that our hard work has been recognised in this way."

"It shows that people flourish through the range of courses offered through the service."

"We are committed to offering a good, wide variety of learning opportunities for people not just to help them learn and gain qualifications but also to learn new skills for employment."

Hundreds of courses are available for people to sign up to including leisure-focused classes in art and craft and health and well-being.

People can also sign up to academic courses including IT, English and maths, through to the vocational such as accounting and construction.

Bishop in new public body role

THE Bishop of Dudley has been appointed to a new role in a public body.

The Rt Rev Graham Usher has been named as a member of the Human Tissue Authority by the Health Secretary.

He and four other new Authority Members will scrutinise the HTA – the regulator for human tissue and organs.

The Bishop said: "I am looking forward to contributing to the work of the Human Tissue Authority which will build on an earlier role I had with the Newcastle Biomedicine Biobank when I was a parish priest in the north east."

"I hope my experience of Christian ethics will be a useful voice when collaborating about complex questions and maintaining dignity, consent and trust around the use of human tissue in research and transplantation."

Developer pulls out of proposal

PLANS for 12 homes near the Wrens Nest Nature Reserve in Dudley will not go ahead as the scheme was withdrawn.

Developer RA Investments had proposed building the dozen new properties on a former council maintenance site on Meadow Road.

Work starts on £5m jobs boosting scheme

Bubbly Sprout celebrates birthday



Celebrations for Bornean orangutan Sprout's fifth birthday at Dudley Zoo

IT'S been a week of birthdays at Dudley Zoo.

First Inca the Asiatic bear was given underfloor heating for her 36th birthday. Sprout the Bornean orangutan was then treated to a playtime with bubbles for her fifth birthday.

Keeper Jodie Dryden said: "She was so intrigued watching them that when one landed on her hand, she sat stock-still staring at it until it popped."

"Just like a typical five-year-old,

Sprout loves playing so we thought for her birthday we'd treat her to the bubbles and see what she made of them."

"But she was soon stretching out trying to scoop them up in her hand and even tried to catch a few in her mouth – it was very amusing to watch."

Sprout has rapidly become a visitors' favourite at the zoo. She made the headlines in October when she was snapped planting an upside down kiss on her mother Jazz.

Asiatic black bear Inca turned 36 on March 29, more than 10 years older than the species is expected to live out in the wild.

The zoo prepared a birthday surprise for her – underfloor heating in the outdoor area of her enclosure.

Section leader Jay Haywood said: "She's definitely slowing down now, but who can blame her – she is the official title holder for the oldest Asiatic black bear in Europe after all."

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Lottery bid to restore art tribute to Churchill

A £100,000 funding bid to restore a tribute to wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill and return it to Dudley town centre has been launched.

Civic leaders want to bring back the stained glass mosaic, which once formed the centrepiece of the town's original Churchill Precinct but has not been seen since being removed in 1991.

Dudley Council has submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. If successful, the cash would be used to restore the artwork back to its former glory so it can take centre stage in the shopping centre which bears the former Prime Minister's name.

The campaign was launched last year by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and was backed by Churchill's grandson Sir Nicholas Soames when he visited the town to mark 50 years since the great leader's death. The MP has been working closely with council bosses and culture groups to put a bid together.

The Heritage Lottery Fund would provide £99,000 towards the project, with £4,000 from Dudley Council.

Mr Austin welcomed the fact the artwork was a step closer to returning to the town centre after 26 years away. He said: "Everyone who grew up in Dudley will remember the magnificent glass memorial to Winston Churchill."

The mosaic formed the centrepiece of the shopping centre for more than 20 years. It consisted of 17 panels which stretched across a section of the precinct.

It was designed by world-renowned artist Edward Bainbridge Copnall and was unveiled in 1969. The memorial was taken down after vandal attacks and weather damage took their toll leaving parts of it in pieces.

Checks made to railway bridge

CHECKS will be carried out to see if a railway bridge in Stourbridge needs to be replaced.

The bridge, which runs over the tracks at Parkfields Road, will be closed to traffic between April 15 and 17 as investigative works are carried out.

Network Rail said assessments would be made regarding the possibility of replacing the bridge, which is close to Stourbridge Town station.

Single-line traffic runs over the bridge into Vauxhall Road but access will be blocked for those three days.

Homes to replace pub given backing

A KINGSWINFORD pub will be knocked down to make way for new homes. Dudley Council has given plans to demolish the Summerhouse on The Portway the go-ahead to allow 14 homes to be built in its place.



Hagley Library is seeking volunteers

A FRESH appeal has been made for more volunteers to help run a village library which was saved from closure.

Hagley Parish Council stepped in to take over responsibility for the Hagley Library's running and management costs around 18 months ago.

There had been fears the library could shut and be replaced with a mobile service as part of Worcestershire County Council plans for £1.9 million of cuts over the next three years.

Residents and councillors were opposed to the proposals and wanted to ensure the library remained open

for the community. An agreement was made between the parish and county councils to secure its future. Now a fresh appeal for extra helpers to lend a hand in the library has been launched.

Parish council chairman Steve Colella, who described the library service as 'essential' said: "The future of Hagley Library is now more assured following the signing of an agreement between Hagley Parish Council and Worcestershire County Council.

"This gives the library support for the building from the parish council

while the county council remain responsible for staff, IT and books."

The county council review had looked at different options including shutting the library, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2012, and replacing it with a mobile service.

Changes are also being made to Be-wley Library as part of the review. It will be combined with a new medical centre due to be built in Dog Lane.

Anyone interested in volunteering at Hagley Library is asked to call 01905 822722 or email KidderminsterLib@worcestershire.gov.uk

100 legal highs are seized in shop raid

MORE than 100 'legal highs' that have caused young people to suffer 'significant health issues' have been seized by police in a joint operation with trading standards.

It followed reports that new psychoactive substances (NPS) were being sold from a shop in Dudley, causing young people to suffer significant health issues.

Officers visited the premises, secured the building and carried out a search that led to the seizure of more than 100 products which are now due to be tested to identify exactly what they contain.

The proprietor is due to be interviewed by police in the near future. Officers carried out the crackdown at the shop last Friday, but the force would not reveal any more details about the raid.

Chief Inspector Simon Inglis, West Midlands Police lead for drugs, said: "Even though these products are not yet banned under criminal law, there is significant evidence to show that these so-called 'legal highs' are a significant risk to public health."

Roulette

"We will continue to work with our partners to remove these dangerous products from the streets."

"Those people who take them are playing Russian roulette with their lives and we need the public to understand the danger they pose."

"Research shows that a proportion of these products actually contain controlled drugs and if they are found in these products seized today the shop owners will face prosecution."

The blitz in Dudley follows a region-wide operation to combat the sale of legal highs. At the end of January, 70 shops were visited in towns and cities across the region.

Trading Standards officials seized 298 legal highs in the joint operation with West Midlands Police.

In Wolverhampton trading standards officials seized 40 substances, while in Walsall 228 NPS packets were confiscated, with 20 removed from shelves across Sandwell.

NPS mimic the effect of illegal drugs.

Currently, they are chemically different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

However, the law is due to change this month so police will be able to seize the products and arrest anyone suspected of supplying them.

Chance to enjoy trip Bywater



Ken Bywater, who has volunteered to take over the running of The Blackcountry Man passenger boat

A HISTORIC narrowboat will be back on the Midland waterways with a new operator at the helm for the season.

The Blackcountry Man takes people out on trips from its base at Stourbridge's Bonded Warehouse.

Day trips to Kinver, music and comedy nights and Christmas journeys to see Santa are among those on offer.

Ken Bywater has taken over as the operator of the boat which

helps raise money towards the preservation and promotion of the waterways. The 70ft-long boat has had a £5,000 revamp and been off the water since October after the previous operator stood down from running trips.

Mr Bywater, aged 63, retired last year after 45 years in the motor trade including working at a Nissan car dealership. But he said he was keen to develop his interest in the waterways having

owned his own motor boat moored on the River Severn.

"I'm really excited and looking forward to it," said Mr Bywater, from Amblecote. "It is a great boat in really good condition with a connection to the Black Country."

Trips take place from April 9. A number of live music nights aboard the boat and the return of the fish and chip supper evenings are also planned on Fridays.

Call 01384 375912 for details.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Half-term sports camp for children

YOUNGSTERS can get active and make new friends at a half-term sports camp.

The Aspire Sports Active Camp will take place during the Whitsun holiday at Hagley High School in Brake Lane.

A host of activities will be on offer along with refreshments and chill out zones.

Four days can be booked for a total of £56 before May 13. The activity will run between May 31 and through to June 3.

Visit www.aspire-sports.co.uk for more information.

Mary, 80, hits the heights for charity

AN 80-year-old campaigner helped to raise hundreds of pounds for good causes after completing an abseil down Dudley Castle.

Mary Law, of Wordsley, took part alongside dozens of other people, managing the 100ft descent down the 11th century castle walls.

She managed to bring in £225.63 for the Stroke Association.

She also scaled the heights in support of the Mesothelioma UK charity.

She supports the charity following the death of her son Roy Shipley at the age of 51 in 2010.

Cash is still being counted but she is hopeful of raising around £500.

"I have to say a big thank you to everyone who has donated money," she said.

Work to improve flow of water into pool

WORK is being carried out to improve a natural water system in a Dudley park.

De-silting work is taking place to improve the flow of a brook into a pool at Sedgley Hall Farm Park.

Large mounds of pool sediments have removed from the pond and fenced off to dry out along a path in the park while work takes place.

The work will help to improve the water quality for local pond and wildlife.

Bric-a-brac sale staged at church

A BRIC-a-brac sale is taking place at a Dudley church next weekend.

It will be held at Saint Peter's Church in Upper Gornal on April 16 from 10am until noon.

It will raise money for the church's funds. Refreshments will also be available.

Soul night at venue

DUDLEY Town Hall holds a Motown and club soul night next week.

The show Friday, April 15 will feature hit sounds played by DJs, creating a party atmosphere at the venue.

The event starts at 8pm and tickets cost £15. To book call 01384 812812 or 0870 320 7000.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



MORE things misheard in youth. A reader who did her teaching practice 40 years ago at an infant school in a road called Beehive Lane recalls the discovery that some of the little kids didn't know the Lord's Prayer. They were found to be chanting: "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hello Beehive Lane."

WITH less than three months to go to the EU referendum, I wonder how long it will be before somebody in Whitehall or Brussels tells us that, under some tiny and well-hidden sub-section of EU law, the result of our voting will be advisory rather than mandatory? Just a hunch...

BRILLIANT locations, fabulous lighting, useless plot based on improbably Freudian cobblers. Maigret (ITV), starring Rowan Atkinson, would have been greatly improved by putting Inspector Bean on case.

THERE is nothing in the 2015 Conservative Manifesto about converting all primary schools into academies. The closest it gets is the pledge to "Turn every failing or coasting secondary school into an academy." Jeremy Corbyn hasn't exactly set the nation alight with his choice of policies so far but in fighting this imposition of power from the top-down, he may be on to a winner. It is a simple matter of honesty. If it isn't in the manifesto, it shouldn't be on the agenda.

NATIONAL treasure John Humphrys says he cannot understand people indulging in the "idiocies" of Twitter and Facebook. Come off it, John. Social-media junkies simply want to be like you. They want to be famous. They want to impress their "friends" and "followers," even though



they go days on end without a single viewing. Saddest of all are not the kids but those middle-aged underachievers who are desperate to show off their intellectual prowess. I know one who publishes a list online of all the books he has read. Don't scoff, John. Show some pity.

I ONCE interviewed Humphrys. He described his famously skinny frame thus: "You'll find more fat on a seagull's lip."

AS Ireland commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, I wonder what those heroic, doomed young revolutionaries of 1916 would make of their homeland today. They were romantics and idealists, teachers and poets. They dreamed of an idyllic, pastoral, Gaelic nation, a land of legend and martyrs, blessed by the blood of its heroes and run by the will of the people, not by foreigners in London. Today's Ireland, thoroughly immersed in the EU, is subject not to diktat from Whitehall but to diktat from Brussels.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Bosses 'confident' of handling births

SANDWELL health bosses have declared they were 'confident' their maternity services could take dozens of extra births a year to help ease the pressure on Walsall's failing hospital.

It was revealed last week that up to 200 expectant mothers a year are set to be told they cannot have their babies delivered at Walsall Manor Hospital and will instead be redi-

rected to services in Sandwell and Walsall.

Elaine Newell, director of midwifery for Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "We have been talking to Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for some time and are pleased to be able to support the Trust in offering access to our maternity service for women from the Walsall area, or from parts

of Sandwell who historically look to the Manor. We are very confident that we have the right capacity to continue to provide our high standards of care in our midwifery services and birthing facilities."

The talks are in the early stages and it has not been confirmed what areas will be affected or how the mothers will be divided between Sandwell's Midwifery Unit or Dudley's Russells Hall Hospital.

Paul Clark, chief executive for Dudley Group NHS Foundation Group, said: "We can confirm the Trust has been in discussion with Walsall CCG and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust regarding maternity provision."

"These discussions are still in the early stages."

"We are unable to provide any more detail."

New name plan in bid to save Hippodrome

By Andrew Turton

CAMPAIGNERS are encouraging the whole Black Country to get behind the fight to save Dudley Hippodrome – with plans to potentially re-name the venue.

They have tabled plans to call the historic theatre The Black Country Hippodrome should they succeed in securing its future.

Plans have yet to be finalised but campaigners want people to see the Castle Hill landmark as a Black Country attraction.

Further talks have been held between the campaigners and Dudley Council after it emerged a proposal to save the theatre 'lacks critical information'.

The Friends of Dudley Hippodrome had worked with a new group which had come forward featuring industry experts. A business plan submitted at the end of last year was deemed 'extremely unrealistic' according to independent assessors.

Ideas

Revised plans were submitted in February in a bid to address some of the concerns raised.

And the name change is among the ideas to bolster its bid across the wider Black Country.

Friends group chairman Gordon Downing said the venue would be known as Dudley Hippodrome initially but this could change to help bring in revenue.

"The name Black Country Hippodrome was put forward to get it more well-known in a wider area," he said. "We had further talks with the council and assessor. We are looking at things we can do differently."

Campaigner Dave Mundon, who worked with the group on the idea, said: "My personal view is it would help put the Black Country on the market more."

Dudley Council says it has been prepared to hold more talks with the group but will continue to pursue plans to demolish the venue.

The council paid £750 to assessors FGM Consulting for an analysis of the steering group's business plan.

War memorial takes pride of place



From left, Councillor Keiran Casey and Don Davies and Harry Brookes from the Woodsetton Charitable Trust Memorial at THE finishing touches have been put in place for Woodsetton War Memorial which has now been moved to the heart of the community.

The memorial has been relocated from behind a fence on nearby church ground in Swan Village, to a more public area of open space opposite the Bramford pub at the crossroads of Parkes Hall Lane and Tipton Road, allowing services to be held on the three-quarter acre site.

It also has a new information board and Union Flag pole installed to remember the 30 fallen heroes of the First World War. The work has cost £35,000, with funding made possible through Heritage Lottery Fund, Ibstock Carey International and Dudley Council. The information board details the soldiers' rank, date of birth,

date of death and where they are buried along with other information. The names include six men from Woodsetton, three from Parkes Hall and 21 from Swan Village.

Research for the board was carried out by High Arcal Secondary School pupils with the help of local historian Andrew Johnson. Woodsetton Charitable Trust has been instrumental in helping get the funding for the project.

Councillor Keiran Casey said: "I think the memorial looks fantastic in its new location, taking pride of place at the heart of the community."

"This board gives us a chance to learn more about the brave people from Woodsetton who went and fought to uphold our great values and who paid the ultimate sacrifice."

Landmark office block set for £14m homes plan

DUDLEY'S landmark Falcon House office block is to be turned into 141 flats in a £14 million regeneration project.

It has been bought by a 29-year-old developer from Nottingham, Arran Bailey, and his ALB Black Country Properties company, who are now seeking permission from Dudley Council for the redevelopment plan.

Mr Bailey wants to convert the 88,000 sq ft, eight storey building into 65 one-bedroom and 76 two-bed apartments. It follows the collapse of plans to demolish Falcon House for a supermarket complex, including a cafe and petrol station.

The site had been owned by property specialist Prosperity, as part of its £100 million buy-to-let investment portfolio. Mr Bailey's ALB Black Country bought it shortly before it was due to go up for auction.

Mr Bailey, managing director of ALB Black Country, said: "The local area has been in need of new housing developments, and we are excited to play a big part in the area's regeneration."

Falcon House, based in The Minories, dates back to the 1960s, and was earmarked as a target for redevelopment by the council several years ago.

Leeds architects firm Headoffice3 has designed the development and will be managing the works to complete in 2017. Its chief executive Glen Harding said: "We believe this project will genuinely improve the local demographics and breathe new life into a tired block."

Himley venue for wedding open day

COPLES planning to tie the knot can receive specialist help on making their special day perfect.

An open day takes place at Himley Hall – one of the Midlands' most historic wedding venues – on Sunday, April 17 from 11am to 4pm. Admission is free.

The venue comes complete with 1930s-style bespoke lighting, period décor and stylish soft furnishings. The beautifully refurbished North Wing, which once housed the Earl of Dudley's swimming pool and cinema, is now an elegant art-deco style banqueting suite and lounge bar.

Wedding co-ordinators and the catering team will be on hand to offer advice, along with registrars from the Staffordshire Registration Service. Call 01384 817 817.

A musical journey through the decades

NOSTALGIC music show All Our Yesterdays is coming to Dudley Town Hall. The musical aims to take the audience on a journey through the sounds of the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Tickets for the 2pm performance on May 10 cost £11. Call 01384 812812.

Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Managing Director Brian Stanley feels that it's all about service. 'Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass in a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving people

money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole.'

Cloudy2Clear service Wolverhampton and the surrounding

area and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people

I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.'

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged

give Brian a call for a free

quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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Doctor calls time on his profession of 32 years

A DOCTOR who is also a badminton champion has retired after 32 years of service.

Dr William Trevor Hampson, known as Trevor, worked his last day at Northway Medical Centre, Alderwood Precinct, Dudley, last Thursday.

The 61-year-old began his career in Birmingham in 1974 where he continued with his medical training. Graduating in 1979 he then went on to work at all the hospitals around the Dudley area, including the old Burton Road and Wordsley Hospitals.

Mr Hampson, of Seisdon, began working for Northway Medical Centre in February 1984, becoming a partner in the surgery 17 years later.

Dr Hampson, a father-of-two, said: "I've seen so many changes over the years. The biggest one to affect the surgery was the building of a million pounds purpose-built surgery that revolutionised the care that we could offer as well as making the surgery a spacious, happier place to work."

"When I started it was small, two-man operation, and we built it up to one of the top performing practices in Dudley."

Dr Hampson celebrated his many years of service with staff and patients at the surgery in a special party on his final day at work. Sarah Bytheway, who also works at the surgery said: "He will be greatly missed."

Dr Hampson, who plays badminton internationally at Masters level, will compete at the Yonex Championship and the European championship in Slovenia in September.

Bosses in pledge over artefacts

BOSSES at Dudley Council have said they are committed to ensuring artefacts and paintings from the town's museum and art gallery will remain on public display once it closes.

The museum building on Priory Street is being axed due to budget cuts. It is expected to close later this year.

Many items on display are expected to move to the Dudley Archives and Local History Centre in Tipton Road but talks are taking place about where other pieces will be displayed.

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "We are continuing to look at options to display these important collections in alternative venues to ensure they remain on display to the public."

Old classmates in reunion date

FORMER pupils of High Park School in Wollaston can get together for a reunion next month. It takes place on May 21 at 7.30pm.

For more information call Andy Houston on 07913989715.

Can-tastic film promotion in store



The stand features hundreds of cans

SUPERMARKET staff were fizzing with creativity after putting together a superhero can sign made from drinks cans.

Hundreds of Coca Cola cans were used to make the combined Batman and Superman logos, which stands 20 cans high at the Tesco store in Stourbridge.

The stand was created by the store ahead of the release of the Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice film.

It was crafted by the store's Coca Cola representative during their night shift. Their creative juices were flowing when they set about making this design, using a mixture of red, black and grey colours of the packaging to draw up the shapes of the symbols.

The red represents Superman and black for Batman.

Accurate

It is reminiscent of how pictures were made on old computers using square pixels, where each drinks pack has a rectangular shape.

It seems some planning had gone into the stand, where the designer had to take into consideration the

shape of the cans and space used to create an accurate design. The film it celebrates, Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice, was released in cinemas across the UK on March 25.

It is a follow-up to 2013's Man of Steel and is the second instalment in the DC Extended Universe.

Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice is the first live-action film that features Batman and Superman together in one film, as well as the first theatrical film to feature live-action portrayals of Wonder Woman, Aquaman, Cyborg and the Flash.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Consultation on school now ends

A PUBLIC consultation about the future of Coseley School has now finished. The consultation, which began in February, came to an end at midnight on Tuesday.

The fate of the school, which has 557 pupils, is expected to be decided by council bosses next month.

Parents and pupils staged public protests outside council meetings and quizzed leaders during debates over the issue of the proposed closure.

Around 1,900 parents have also signed a petition set up by angry parent Michaela Garbett, of Roseville.

Omna n chain entertainment

ENTERTAINER and broadcaster Bily Spake Mon hosts a night of live music in Tipton this weekend.

Mr Spake Mon, real name Brian Dakin, presents the Omna n Chain Show at Brook Street Community Centre from 7.30pm on Saturday (April 9).

It will feature local bands and performers, among them the band Missing Link and Wednesbury duo So It Goes, as well as solo singer songwriter John Langford and comedian magician Ron Popple.

Tickets are £5. Call 0121 557 0371.

Store workers in sporty fundraisers

SAINSBURY'S staff in the Dudley borough got behind Sport Relief 2016 - raising £7,850 for the charity.

Amblecote store colleagues helped to raise £4,761 through a sponsored walk, a bleep-test, quizzes, raffles and a tombola. A Zumbathon and visits from Disney's Mickey, Minnie, Elsa and Olaf helped to boost funds.

Merry Hill store staff raised £3,089 with a bake-off, leg wax and Peppa Pig. They also took part in a Sport Relief Mile at the Dell Stadium.

Toilets could become taxi booking office

DISUSED public toilets in Stourbridge could be converted into a booking office for a taxi company.

A change of use proposal proposal for the public convenience in Health Lane, Oldswinford has been submitted to Dudley Council.

A report included as part of the planning package states: "The building would be used purely as a booking office and would be staffed 24 hours a day by no more than one member of staff any one time."

Meeting with police

RESIDENTS in Brierley Hill are invited to a police forum on May 16.

The public meeting will take place at Nine Locks Community Centre in Hill Street from 6.7pm.

The Brierley Hill police team will be on hand to talk to residents about any concerns they might have.

Council cuts costs on housing repairs

COUNCIL bosses in Dudley say they have spent tens of thousands of pounds less than expected on bringing empty homes back up to scratch - in reply to claims of 'throwing money' at idle properties.

Repairs to nine empty homes in the borough were originally expected to cost £230,000 but Dudley Council said the work had been completed for £88,000 following a review into how the works were being carried out.

All the properties have now been let.

Millions of pounds are spent every year on empty houses across the Dudley borough.

And the cash-strapped council, which must save £20 million over three years, has been warned it must continue to save money and change the way it operates on costly empty properties.

Some £17 million was spent on empty homes during 2014/15. The work included 'necessary maintenance' such as electricity tests, rewiring, plastering and clearing gardens.

Ignored

There are currently 617 empty homes in Dudley, although 300 of those are already allocated or being advertised.

Councillor Elaine Taylor, a member of the council's place scrutiny committee, said some properties had been ignored for too long. She said they had been left to fall into a poor state of repair, meaning they were costing more to refurbish now.

"We have to concede that it is not cost-effective to just throw money at these when clearly they will never generate a return," she said.

"I truly believe the way forward would be to view each property with a criteria costed and analysed as to renovate to let as council affordable housing or sell to a private investor."

Follow scrutiny committee member, Councillor Dean Perks, said refurbishing properties to a high standard was 'unachievable' and that the council should do only the bare minimum needed for them to be rented out.

Housing boss Councillor Gaye Partridge said: "There is further work planned to determine how best to invest in our housing stock in a way that gives good value and good quality.

"I am confident that we will see a continued trend towards less empty homes in the future," she added.

Roll up for bowls club open day



Crystal Bowls Club chairman Ann Darby gets ready for the open day at Stevens Park, Wollescote

A BOWLS club is holding an open day as it marks its 21st anniversary.

Members of Lye and Wollescote Bowls Club has added cause for celebration after two new changing rooms were opened.

The club started life playing in the Crystal Leisure Centre in Stourbridge, before support from Dudley Council enabled it to move outdoors.

The club has spent nearly two decades in the stunning surrounds

of Wollescote's Stevens Park and Grade II-listed Wollescote Hall.

The open day takes place on April 16 from 11am to 4pm.

Treasurer John Darby is married to club chairman Ann, who was one of the club's founder members back in 1995.

Mr Darby said: "One of our former members, the late Eddie Palmer, persuaded Dudley Council to convert what was the lawn tennis club to a six rink full bowl-

ing ground back in 1995. "We

played there for around six years then in 2002 we built our first pavilion thanks to a grant from the council.

"At the moment we have 41 members for the current season."

"The numbers have gradually declined since then and we're trying to boost them again now."

Wollescote Hall was given to the people of Lye and Wollescote by Ernest Stevens in 1930.

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Selfie with hijacker is just simply 'plane' daft

WE'VE all been there. You're on a nice peaceful flight on the way to your holiday in the sun, when some whack-job in Curly Watts specs tells you he's got dynamite in his vest and is going to blow the plane up.

So naturally, the first thing that comes into your mind is to ask the madman if he would awfully mind posing with you for a selfie.

At least that is what Ben Innes from Leeds chose to do after the plane he was travelling on was hijacked.

He didn't even use it to cancel his hotel booking. Instead, grinning like a deranged Cheshire Cat, he had his photograph taken by the lunatic threatening to blow the plane up, putting the lives of all the fellow passengers in imminent danger.

Doesn't that tell you all you need to know about the narcissistic, fame-obsessed world of people who live their lives on so-called social media?

And it isn't even a proper selfie. While I wouldn't describe myself as a keen purveyor of the medium, it is my understanding that a selfie has to be taken by the person in the picture.

And as we can see from the images which have been plastered all around the world over the past week, both his hands are clearly visible.

So he either asked Curly if he would kindly take his hand off his suicide belt for a moment and hold the camera, which seems a tad unlikely, or he roped somebody else in to take the picture. What a pair of clowns.

Innes said he went through a "thorough thought process", and wanted to show the hijacker he was human. But I'm really not convinced. Far from reassuring the hijacker, I think such behaviour would freak anybody out. The likelihood is the thought "this guy's an even bigger weirdo than me".

Thankfully, it turned out that the hijacker was not carrying any explosives, and the passengers escaped unharmed. But it could have been very different.

Ben Innes, by the way, is a health-and-safety auditor.

Remember this next time you hear about children being told to wear goggles for conkers, bus drivers who have to wear high-visibility jackets, or builders who are not allowed to climb ladders.

□ □ □

On Friday, 40 members of the public wore Piers Morgan masks and boarded the giant DY Eye Ferris wheel in Dudley.

Some may recall the renowned sage had described the wheel as offering a horrible view.

"I can't think of a grimmer panorama than Dudley at 7.37 in the morning," said the great man.

I certainly can't think of a grimmer one than last Friday.



Ivan and Yvonne have fun in a photo booth



Ivan Partridge in hospital with devoted wife Yvonne



Ivan with his grandchildren Daniyal and Harley

Courageous Ivan loses cancer battle

Cancer patient Ivan Partridge will leave a fundraising legacy following his death at the age of 55. **ANDY TURTON** reports

AN inspirational cancer sufferer who had kickstarted a charity fundraising effort for a hospice has died aged 55.

Ivan Partridge was diagnosed last year with a rare form of melanoma leading to him needing major facial surgery.

He had been taken into Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice within the last fortnight and offered revolutionary treatment.

Last week, The Chronicle told how he was facing the future with a smile thanks to his fundraising efforts. However, the inspirational company director has since lost his courageous fight against the disease.

Since his diagnosis, Mr Partridge, from Quarry Bank, had vowed to help raise money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Family

Charity nights, collections and a mammoth bike ride are all helping towards bringing in cash.

And his family say the fundraising efforts will continue in his name giving them a great deal of comfort as they grieve.

His wife Yvonne, 55, said: "He fought to be get better. He wanted to carry on. He didn't want to die."

"But I know he will be with us on his bike. It has been a really big help to know that the fundraising will carry on."

Initially, Mr Partridge visited doctors com-



The family celebrates on Ivan and Yvonne's wedding day

plaining over a blocked nose and having an operation to remove nasal polyps. But doctors later broke the news he had rare strain of melanoma and faced major facial surgery.

Donations

The couple married last August at Dudley Register Office at Priory Hall and decided to raise money for the hospice by having donations instead of wedding gifts.

A funding club night was also held.

Just last week Mr Partridge said of the fundraising efforts: "It has give me something to focus on. You just have to live for every day."

He also thanked his family for their support including daughter Rebecca, 23, and 18-month-old grandson Daniyal, and step-daughter Emma, 28, and her partner Michael, and Emma's children Harley, four, and 11-month-old Hudson, and step-son Aaron, 23.

Family friend Richard Stafford has organised a bike ride to help push the cash total past



The couple wed at Dudley Register Office

\$10,000. In June, Mr Stafford will be taking on a charity bike ride from Land's End to John O'Groats.

Money raised will also be split with a charity supporting motor neurone disease sufferers after his friend Robert Owen was diagnosed with the condition.

Mr Stafford said: "The bike ride will be in Ivan's memory too. It is so sad."

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SINCE 2005

Putin angle a desperate move by 'Project Fear'

AMBER Rudd MP has found a new angle for 'Project Fear' as the 'insiders' get ever more desperate and inventive in their battle of wits.

She tells us that leaving the EU could add £500 million to UK energy bills because President Putin 'might hijack our energy security as a political pawn to bring Europe to its knees'. Maybe she should go away and think about that for a minute.

If she is right then being in the EU will be more harmful to us than being out. If Mr Putin does decide to 'attack' Europe by massively raising gas and oil

Someone funds the terrorists

WITH the tragic and heart-tugging events we have witnessed in Brussels and formerly Paris, a lot has been said and written around who these perpetrators are, where they come from and so on.

They almost always seemed to be dressed in western style clothing, use western technology and have undoubtedly experienced western hospitality, and yet claim all westerners be infidels and targets - hypocrisy at its most extreme.

I recall Margaret Thatcher stating that once MI5 found who were funding the IRA it became easier to stifle their oxygen.

Someone somewhere with more money than sense is funding these killers.

Why can't the world's biggest nations discover who is paying the bill?

ISIS have been moulded, groomed and bred with billions behind them, and yet no-one seemingly knows from where. This I find as hard to accept.

S HARRISON
West Bromwich

prices, as she claims, then won't we be better off in a free market where we can find other suppliers or come to a separate agreement with Russia over pricing?

Using her logic, if he imposes these rises on the EU then the higher prices will apply whether we are in or out.

To imply that he will raise our fuel prices in isolation, while leaving the rest of the EU alone, is an obvious nonsense particularly if he is doing it, as she claims, to 'bring Europe to its knees'.

What has driven up energy costs,

with a detrimental effect to both domestic and industrial energy bills, is the EU's 2008 Climate Change Act, dubbed 'the most expensive piece of legislation in British history', which the Government themselves calculate will cost the UK taxpayer £72 billion (at current prices) by 2050. Outside the EU this Act could be repealed and costs massively reduced as a consequence.

Far from being worse off outside the EU, as Ms Rudd claims, the facts show quite the reverse.

G WILSON
Stourbridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

EMAIL

dudley.chron@expressandstar.co.uk

IDS no hero for the poor and disabled

SO Iain Duncan Smith has resigned. He says the proposed cuts put in the Budget by the Chancellor George Osborne were unfair to take it from the poor and disabled. Even Tory backbenchers didn't agree with it, hence the complete U-turn on this part of the Budget.

Don't feel any sympathy for IDS, he's the one who turfed out tenants from their homes where they had lived for decades when he brought in the hated bedroom tax.

IDS is the one who turfed out disabled people from their adapted homes because they had a spare room. This is the same person who has been to courts of appeal several times to try and overturn cases they have lost with the disabled.

He has spent £150,000 of tax payers money doing this and the now-new Secretary of State for work and pensions is carrying on with the appeals costing a further £50,000, this on the back of George Osborne giving the wealthy tax breaks. We shouldn't be surprised. This is a Government more severe than that of Margaret Thatcher.

This Tory Government seems hell bent on making cuts to the most poor and disabled people in this country. Even David Cameron's mother doesn't agree with him.

B WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford

Hallé or nothing

AT the end of a concert by the Hallé Orchestra on Radio 3, the announcer gave a list of the towns they will be visiting. This would have included Dudley but Dudley Council has ceased funding an annual visit by the Hallé.

The council are now closing the museum, so another cultural activity will disappear from the scene. What next will this council cease to fund?

E CARELESS
Halesowen

So what did you expect?

WELL done Ian Austin for sticking up for Dudley and our DY-Eye tourist attraction against 'snobbish' critics. I am sick of people knocking it and moaning about the view. We are in the heart of the Black Country - what do they expect to see? The Manhattan Skyline? The rim of the Grand Canyon? Glacier National Park? I think it's great for Dudley and so do the local businesses.

He has spent £150,000 of tax payers money doing this and the now-new Secretary of State for work and pensions is carrying on with the appeals costing a further £50,000, this on the back of George Osborne giving the wealthy tax breaks. We shouldn't be surprised. This is a Government more severe than that of Margaret Thatcher.

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Advice on protecting property

Kingswinford TG

THE March 15 meeting, the 54th AGM, was begun by speaker Sarah Nixon.

Sarah is the home security and safety officer with the West Midlands crime and vulnerability office. She told ladies of ways to protect themselves and their property efficiently. Some of the actions were quite simple.

Most were common sense, such as making sure the front of the house is properly locked before going down the garden. There was lively discussion by members as they shared their own experiences. Sarah was thanked on behalf of the group by Sheila Watts.

Once the Annual General Meeting began, it was interesting to be reminded of what the guild had been up to during the previous year.

The present committee was re-elected en-block, but chairman Enid Fennell did point out that new members would be needed next year.

Four members will not be able to continue as regular members as health and other responsibilities make attendance almost impossible. Nevertheless, the guild is thriving. Doreen Conley said she was honoured to accept the role of president.

Joyce Robins was thanked for brightening the room with flowers, which she donated as an extra raffle prize. Prizes were won by Brenda Adkin and Barbara White.

The next meeting will be in Kingswinford Community Centre on April 11, at 7.30pm when Terry Church will give a talk entitled 'You Couldn't Make It Up'.

Crafty way to create floral arrangement



Some members stand by the floral arrangements, while others admire the cakes

Sedgley Evening Guild

each month at Sedgley Community Centre at 7.15pm and the Arts and Craft Group each Wednesday afternoon.

New members and visitors will always be made welcome.

Presentation set in 24th century

Amblecote History Society

24th century classroom. Andrew Drew will give the 'accepted' interpretation of life in the 21st century.

There are many humorous jibes at the way in which artefacts are interpreted as well as a possible history of events from 2000 and upwards.

It is a great piece of satire that will leave you wondering about life today and

how it will be viewed in the future.

The evening promises to be most entertaining and thought provoking.

Non-members are most welcome to join in. The admission charge is £2 on the door.

For more information about the 2016 meeting programme, visit www.amblecotehistorysociety.org.uk

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Eye is wheely good as Bishop gives blessing



The Bishop of Dudley Graham Usher prepares to go for a spin on the DY Eye wheel in Dudley

THE Bishop of Dudley has taken on ride on DY Eye – and given his blessing to the under-fire Ferris wheel.

The Rt Rev Graham Usher was joined by a group of local clergy for a ride on the 115ft wheel, and afterwards hailed it as 'fantastic'.

The attraction has been criticised by some local people and national journalists, including Piers Morgan – but the bishop has sprung to the big wheel's defence.

"The critics of the Dudley Eye need

to come and experience the ride themselves and I think they will be duly converted," he said. "It is a great attraction that offers fantastic views of the Black Country and further afield, such as Staffordshire and Shropshire.

"I wasn't impressed when I heard the Dudley wheel was being described by some as the 'worst tourist attraction in England'.

"It is ridiculous what some people have said about the ride. They have probably never been to Dudley."

Thousands of people have already paid a visit to the Dudley Eye, which has attracted nationwide interest.

An American country music star has even leaped to Dudley's defence following a visit to the town.

Stacia Watkins said she was stunned to hear about the flak Dudley had received over the wheel. The singer from Nashville, Tennessee, took a trip on the wheel as she was in the Black Country to perform in Stourbridge.

Stacia said: "Dudley has so much history and so much past, we in America would love that. The people of Dudley and everyone I met in the Black Country were really proud people. So I think Piers Morgan needs to either

put up or shut up and get on the eye."



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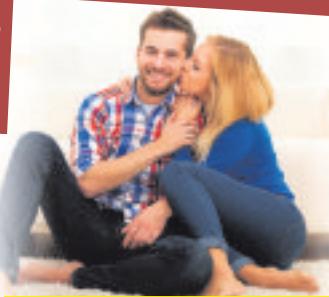


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Business aiming for the sky with airships



The Lockheed Martin hybrid airship, one of two companies in talks with Straightline Aviation

A BUSINESS based at an airfield near Dudley aims to become the first in the world to operate a new generation of airships.

In two years' time Straightline Aviation says it will have a fleet of four to six hybrid airships flying passengers and freight in normally inaccessible areas of Africa, Canada and China.

But not over the Black Country or Staffordshire, although the offices at Wolverhampton Business Airport, at Bobbington, will remain the company's home as it grows.

Company bosses Mike Kendrick

and Mark Dorey formerly ran Richard Branson's Virgin airship and hot air balloons business, while Mr Kendrick has become better known for his Mineseeker Foundation, which works to find and remove mines in Africa.

Helium

The pair are in advanced talks with the two companies currently developing the new airships, Hybrid Air Vehicles in the UK and US aviation giant Lockheed Martin, to become their first customer.

Both companies expect to have their airships ready to fly commercially in 2018. Filled with helium, the new

airships use a combination of lighter-than-air, aircraft and helicopter technologies - hence the term 'hybrid'.

They can land on any piece of cleared ground or even on the water.

"These aircraft will transport cargo and passengers to previously inaccessible locations around the globe," said Mr Kendrick. "The first versions will carry up to 20 tons of freight, as well as passengers but they are scalable to many times that number."

As well as working in developing countries lacking modern transport networks, the airships would be ideal for oil and gas exploration companies working in inaccessible areas, he said.

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Jodie's out to educate over plight of primates

A ZOO keeper who has spent her life learning about primates is flying out to Indonesia to help a critically endangered species of monkey.

Jodie Dryden, Dudley Zoo's senior keeper of primates, will spend three weeks in Sulawesi to help educate locals about the plight of the crested black macaques.

The 25-year-old helped design the attraction's newly-opened macaque enclosure.

She is being funded by the zoo and will meet up with members of the Selamatkan Yaki group, which translates to 'save the Sulawesi crested black macaque', on April 11.

"The species is critically endangered and their numbers have dropped by about 90 per cent in just 30 years," said Jodie.

"That's because their habitat is destroyed, they are being hunted for

bush meat and sold in the pet trade. "We need to educate the locals, which can take time and we don't want to just preach to them or tell them what they can and cannot do."

Jodie said she wanted to spread the word about the macaque's plight and had launched a fundraising campaign to help support them abroad.

"I'll be giving talks and presentations to the locals in Indonesia to try and persuade them not to hunt the monkeys for bush meat," she said.

"It's important they see how actively involved we are in trying to save them."

Dudley Zoo's new state-of-the-art macaque enclosure opened over the Easter bank holiday.

It houses the attraction's seven macaques and forms part of the zoo's overall £200,000 redevelopment project.



Jodie Dryden will be flying out to Indonesia to help save the endangered crested black macaque

Pervert is trapped by gran using Facebook

A WOMAN assumed the Facebook identity of her 11-year-old granddaughter to trap a pervert who was grooming the child on the internet, a judge was told.

She made the move after discovering the pair had been in contact through the social network's private messenger, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

She disclosed her concerns to an acquaintance who admitted he was equally worried about the Facebook contact between 14-year-old relative and a man.

Checks found that 36-year-old Robert Hadley was the culprit in both cases and all but two of his 40 Facebook 'friends' were young girls, said Mr David Bennett, prosecuting.

The grandmother accessed the 11-year-old's account and posed as her to contact Hadley in February last year. During the internet conversation that followed he asked for a photograph of the child wearing a bra. The request were rejected.

Trouble

Instead he was sent a snap of the girl in her foot-bath kit and he sent a lewd image of himself in return before warning that he would get into 'a lot of trouble' if she did not keep their communications secret.

The woman maintained the pretence until February 25 when she contacted police after Hadley tried to arrange a meeting with the girl he assumed was exchanging messages and pictures with him.

He had also tried to launch a relationship with the 14-year-old, ignoring her comments that she was too young, the court heard.

Police arrested Hadley the day after being alerted by the grandmother but discovered

he had destroyed the SIM cards on his two mobile phones shortly before they arrived. He claimed to have done this the previous day because he 'knew what he had been doing was wrong', said Mr Simon Hanns, defending, who added: "He was ashamed and filled with remorse."

But Mr Hanns conceded that the defendant - who had lied about his age to the girls, claiming to be at least eight years younger - had displayed elements of grooming during the Facebook conversations. Mr Hanns added: "He got involved in this while living a solitary life after the break up of his own relationship."

Hadley, from Netherby Road, Sedgley admitted four charges of trying to incite under age girls to engage in sexual activity on various dates between December 24 2014 and February 26 2015.

Judge James Burbidge QC jailed him for three years and said: "You clearly have a worrying interest in young girls."

"The grandmother ought to be highly commended for her vigilance. She took over a Facebook page to weed you out and ensure that the police had evidence with which to pursue you before you had the chance to do any harm."

Homes bid submitted for site of social club

A SOCIAL club in Dudley could be knocked down to make way for new homes, if plans lodged with council chiefs are given the go-ahead.

Developers want to demolish the Pensnett and Bromley Services Memorial Club in Bradley Street and create room to build nine homes on the site.

Plans show eight semi-detached and one detached property would be fitted onto the site of the once-popular club.

An application to knock down the building has been submitted to planning officers at Dudley Council by MJR Services. A decision is expected in the coming weeks.

Attractions link up for St George's Day

DUDLEY Castle is joining forces with the borough council to host St George's Day celebrations for the first time.

Dudley Council and Dudley Zoological Gardens will combine to mark the patron saint's day on April 23.

This is the first year the event will be held in partnership with the town's famous landmark.

The event will kick off at 3pm in the 11th century castle's courtyard with numerous activities on show.

In the morning, Dudley Market will also host events, with visitors able to meet creatures from the town zoo's animal encounters feature.

Councillor Steve Walther, Mayor of Dudley, said: "This is a first for us, and we're really excited to be working together with our neighbour to host this year's St George's Day."

"The medieval setting is the perfect location to celebrate the legend of St George and to attract people into the town centre."

Derek Grove, zoo director, said: "We're delighted to be working alongside Dudley Council in celebrating St George's Day this year."

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Library change decision due

MORE than half of library staff in Dudley are in favour of plans for volunteers to help run the service, a survey reveals.

Results of a staff poll shows slightly more of the 165 workers were in favour of the change with 55 per cent of giving it their backing.

Under the changes, a Libraries, Archives and Learning Mutual would be established. The plans have been backed by Dudley Council's cabinet. The full council is due to make a final decision this week.

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, for adult and community learning has supported the plan, saying: "The mutual model would be a positive outcome from a trying situation."

CCTV plan launched to tackle violence towards taxi drivers

TAXIS in Dudley will have CCTV installed inside under plans to tackle child abuse and violence against drivers.

The move comes after a driver was attacked and left seriously injured in the street in Brierley Hill.

Mohammed Ahmed was badly beaten and was taken to hospital after the attack in Bell Street South on February 28.

Officials say the cameras would also boost safety in the wake of child sexual exploitation in other parts of the country. The cameras would also be

used to capture those damaging taxis or making off without paying. A consultation will be launched into the proposals. Dudley Council's taxi committee outlined a consultation into the policy at a meeting on Tuesday.

Dudley Private Hire and Taxi Association chairman Shaz Saleem said he was broadly in favour of the scheme, but wanted information on how it would be funded and who had control of the footage. "Having CCTV would protect drivers and customers and ensure safety," he said. "It would act as a deterrent to people."

"We have had drivers who have been abused, some of them have been hit, and some custom-

ers have been making off with paying. It is about safety. It is not a question of spying on people."

He added: "My main questions over it is who is funding it. Also will the council have access to the CCTV?"

Dudley Council's taxi committee chairman, Councillor Richard Body, said the consultation would discover more information on how to implement the policy.

Options will be explored to either force the compulsory fitting of CCTV, allowing it to be optional for drivers or scrapping the plan altogether.

It is expected to report back within around three months.

Plea for help at beer festival

ORGANISERS of the 19th Stourbridge Beer Festival are looking for volunteers. The Stourbridge and Halesowen branch of the Campaign for Real Ale is holding the event in Stourbridge Town Hall from April 20 to 23.

Camra members can sign up to help out at any of the sessions at stourbridgebeerpfest.org.uk.

There will be more than 80 casks of real ale this year. Among the local breweries involved are Kinver Brewery, Halesowen breweries Fixed Wheel and Angel Ales; Pig Iron, Brierley Hill and Black Country Ales, Upper Gorval. The Mercian Alliance of Brewers is supplying a collaborative beer called Cnebba.

Golden couple tie knot again



Ann and John Marsh renew their vows to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary

A COUPLE who met by chance on Brierley Hill high street have marked 50 years of marriage.

To celebrate, John and Ann Marsh renewed their wedding vows at an emotional occasion in front of friends and family at the Quarry Bank Congregation Church.

After living in Gornal, Dudley and Brierley Hill, the pair settled in Quarry Bank 42 years ago.

Retired tool maker Mr Marsh, aged 71, said the couple had decided to renew their vows as 'it seemed like the right thing to, it's really important after 50 years to mark it.'

"Hopefully we'll make it for a few more years. Ann thought it was lovely, she really enjoyed it and it made both of our days."

The pair met as they were walking down the street in Brierley Hill in what was 'basically love at first sight'.

"We were just walking through the town and met each other - that was it really. We started going out, went to the music shop together then started going out to the pictures. That was it, we were away."

He added: "We took to each other straight away and I don't think it's ever changed."

"It was good then and it's good now."

"It was basically love at first sight and we've always had interests in the same things."

The couple - who have two sons, Richard, 47 and Robert 44 - and two grandchildren, married at the old St James Church in Pensnett High Street, and remarried at the church in Quarry Bank, where they have been members of the congregation for 30 years.

"It's lovely that they are so close," said Richard. "We all live close and it's nice to have family around. We all meet up together as often as we can and we've always been a very close family."



The couple on their wedding day

Family heirloom is topic of history talk

THE 250-year journey of a family heirloom will be the subject of a local history talk in Dudley tonight (Thursday).

Mary Bodfish, chairman of Smethwick Local History Society, will present 'The Baby in the Locket' at Dudley's Archives and Local History Centre in Tipton Road from 7.30pm. She will explain the history of a fragile gold locket containing a faded photograph of a baby, which she inherited from her great-grandmother.

She has pieced together the mystery of its identity and unveiled generations of history in the process.

Janet Lea, Secretary of the Friends of Dudley Archives, said: "Family history is a fascinating subject and this talk shows how once we start to research our past it can often lead in many intriguing and unusual ways."

Coffee is served from 7pm and the talk is free to members of the Friends of Dudley Archives and £2 for visitors. For more information contact the centre on 01384 812770.

Homes bid at pub site

A DERELICT pub could be knocked down to make way for new homes, if plans are approved.

The Commercial Inn in Pensnett is described as being in a poor state of repair and has attracted anti-social behaviour.

Harbay Limited has lodged proposals with Dudley Council to demolish the pub and build 10 apartments.

A decision on whether to grant planning permission is expected within three months.

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Bench in memory of tragic boy

A MEMORIAL bench has been unveiled in memory of a teenage boy who died from pneumonia in the seaside town where he spent some of his happiest days.

Callan Fendall-Bettis, aged 15, of Lower Gornal, passed away on New Year's Eve just days after developing a cough.

Devastated mother Tracy said the bench means he would still be able to be a part of their traditional holiday to Weymouth.

There are also plans to honor Callan closer to home. His school Ellowes Hall Sports College also plans to install a bench, which will wrap around a tree and also honour another 14-year-old cancer victim Danni Burrows who died in 2014.

A plaque will be added to the music hall and a musician of the year award named in his honour.

Pub quiz to help charity

AN award-winning Upper Gornal real ale pub is holding a charity quiz this month.

The quiz, in aid of White House Cancer Support in Dudley, is being held at the Jolly Crispin, Clarence Street on April 26 from 7pm. It is open to teams of up to four and entry fee for a team is £5.

The pub's next cider festival will run on May 27 and 28 with a fun day to follow on Sunday, May 29.

FOCUS ON SEDGLEY AND GORNAL

Campaign to stop riders in their tracks at beauty spot

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to ban motorbikes from a Sedgley beauty spot after residents complained of anti-social behaviour.

Damian Corfield, who is standing as Labour's candidate for Sedgley in the forthcoming local elections, is pushing for Dudley Council to take a stance against motorbikes getting on Sedgley Beacon. He wants to make the area safer for people to visit.

"The land at Sedgley Beacon has been ruined because of people riding motorbikes over the area," Mr Corfield said. "Grass is being turned into mass areas of mud."

He said he aimed to make the Sedgley Beacon a more attractive and safer place to visit and help to save the local environment.

Treated

"I have heard from lots of residents who live near the Beacon who are not happy with the way it is being treated by people who use it as a place to ride their motorbikes," he added.

"I am asking the council to take action and keep motorbikes away from the area.

"However, we would ask people to be the eyes and ears of the community to report these incidents of anti-social behaviour to us and the police."

By Jamie Brassington

they had three complaints last month about nuisance associated with off-road bikes.

Alan Lunt, strategic director for the place directorate at Dudley Council, said: "People are not allowed to ride motorbikes on any of the borough's parks or open spaces for a number of reasons. It is not only dangerous but causes a nuisance for people enjoying the areas for their intended purpose.

"We do what we can in terms of securing the area and already have barriers and gates in place to stop bikes getting on there, from the Dudley borough side of the site.

"I'll continue to take up local concerns with Dudley Council so we can get the extra safety measures that residents want put in place to us and the police."



Lisa Chambers with her dog Yogi who became seriously ill

A testing time for poor Yogi

A PET owner says her dog is to be used as a 'guinea pig' in tests linked to a controversial vaccination.

Yogi, a four-year-old rottweiler, went temporarily blind, lost weight and suffered other health issues through a mystery illness.

Owner Lisa Chambers, a 46-year-old mother from Sedgley, feared it could have been triggered by the after-effects of the Lepto4 vaccination that Yogi was given shortly before the problems started in November.

She said: "In 24 hours he became listless and steadily deteriorated."

Yogi is now being gently weaned off steroids so he can be considered for further testing.

Mrs Chambers said: "I do not mind him being treated as a guinea pig because I would not want another owner to go through what I have had to endure."

MP backs tidy-up at graveyard

THE clean-up of a graveyard in Sedgley which includes war graves continues to be brought up to scratch – and the campaign has been praised by an MP. Weeds and brambles which have made a number of graves at All Saints Church inaccessible are being cleared away.

Ian Austin, Labour MP for Dudley North, said it was unacceptable that the graveyard, which runs along Gospel End Street, had been allowed to deteriorate and that he was pleased action was now being taken.

The campaign was boosted as young offenders could be brought in to help as part work to give back to the community.

Mr Austin said: "Not only could we get the graveyard cleaned up, but local people would be able to access the area and pay their respects."

Visit library to make bunting

VISITORS to Sedgley Library can make decorative patriotic bunting for the Queen's 90th birthday.

Bunting workshops are being held on April 19 from 4-6pm and on April 21 from 10am to noon.

It will be used for a royal celebration at Dudley Local History and Archives Centre on June 10 from noon to 4pm. It will include history talks and craft workshops and a royal afternoon tea.



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Litter pick round housing estate

A COMMUNITY litter pick will take place on a Brierley Hill housing estate this month.

The Chapel Street Tenants and Residents Association have arranged for a group of litter pickers to meet at Bricklin Court on April 16 from 10am.

The association has encouraged anyone who has some time to spare to join in with the two-hour event. Volunteers of all ages are welcome.

Alan Lunt, strategic director for place on Dudley Council, said: "Community litter picks are great as they bring the local residents together to work for the good of the whole estate, aiming to make it a better place to live and play in."

"I think it is brilliant that volunteers give up their spare time to participate in such events as this community clean up."

Bags, high-visibility jackets, litter pickers and gloves will be provided, but unaccompanied children will not be allowed on the litter pick.

Gold success at the double



Gold Award winners Chloe Smith, left, and her twin sister Elenor

TWO teenage sisters have both collected the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award – four years after they first started the young people's programme.

Eighteen-year-old twins Chloe and Elenor Smith from Kingswinford, received the award from Prince Edward, Duke of Wessex, at St James's Palace in London.

The siblings had previously completed bronze and silver awards, which they began aged 14 at Summerhill School in Kingswinford. Elenor said: "I'm really proud to have achieved the award. There is an element of relief, too, because of how hard it is to achieve."

Chloe added: "We never thought we would get this far. There have been some really good times along the way."

The sisters have taken part in walking expeditions in the Lake District, Brecon

'Scumbag' fly-tippers cost thousands in clean-up bill

FLY-TIPPERS have been branded 'idiots' and 'scumbags' after Dudley Council revealed it had spent more than £10,000 cleaning its four worst-hit streets in just 12 months.

The authority spent £10,631 cleaning up the four roads last year – and received 820 complaints about fly-tipping throughout the whole of the borough.

Cradley and Wollescote councillor Richard Body, who represents one of the worst affected areas, said: "I would recommend and urge everyone to buy a cheap dashboard camera."

"If more people started using the cameras and more culprits started getting caught these

idiots would think twice about fly-tipping. They are scumbags."

"It costs the local authority a lot of money to clear up. People can get fined up to £250 for fly-tipping but I would like to see that penalty double."

The worst-hit streets were Hall Street in Cradley, Oak Lane in Kingswinford, Mears Coppice in Quarry Bank and Foxcote Lane in Cradley.

Problem

Kingswinford North and Wall Heath Councillor Dave Tyler said: "There has been a problem for a number of years at Oak Lane. The council has put a lot of measures in place to stop fly-tipping."

"We have been very successful but the prob-

lem is we need to catch people who are dumping the waste. We obviously can't put officers down there all the time, although we have used CCTV in the past – which has been successful."

"We need public support as well."

Councillor Mohammed Hanif, for Lye and Stourbridge North, said: "I'm disgusted and disappointed with the amount of fly-tipping taking place."

There were 820 reports of fly-tipping in Dudley during 2014/15, up 12 per cent from 728 three years before.

Cost to the council to clear up fly-tipping across the borough in 2014/15 was £45,366 – rising from £35,339 in 2012/13.

Dudley Council prosecuted five people last year, nine the previous year and 12 in 2012/13.

Get a slice of bake-off action

BAKERS are being invited to dust off their aprons, take part in the first Great Dudley Bake-off next weekend.

The event on April 9 is part of the Free Radio DY Eye event.

Brierley Hill Inner Wheel members have been asked to help run the event, following the success of previous bake-offs in the borough.

There will be four categories: fruit cake, sponge cake, cupcake/muffin and biscuit/cookie. Entries can be dropped at Church of St Edmund, Castle Street, Dudley, between 9am and 10.15am on the day.

Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Steve Waithe will judge the entries, which will be sold off in aid of his nominated charities. Shortlisting and judging takes place from 10.15am to around 11.45am, with the winner being named at approximately 12.30pm.

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Helpers needed for church grounds work

GREEN-FINGERED volunteers are needed to help tend to the grounds of a landmark Dudley church.

The St John's Preservation Group is looking for people who can help with work to clear the grounds at St John's Church in Kates Hill.

It's part of an on-going project to restore the church and re-open it to the community.

Chairman Deb Brownlee said new helpers would be made welcome.

The church, which opened in 1840, shut in 2002 due to safety concerns but recent surveys have shown the nave and chancel are both structurally sound.

The group hopes to develop it as a community hub, a tourist centre with local history display area and cafe, and also to return it to Christian worship.

To help the group email savestjohn.schurch@hotmail.co.uk or call 0787 119 5042.

Stories told at museum

TWO performers tell stories of life in the Black Country at an arts event next week.

Known as 'The Works' Canteen, it is being staged at Dudley's Black Country Living Museum on Tuesday, April 5.

Storyteller John Edgar and performing poet Alison Absolute are the guests at the evening held in the Rolfe Street Café. Doors open at 7.30pm and the event begins at 7.45pm. Admission is £3.

It will be hosted by Dave Reeves, the museum's poet-in-residence.

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Award-winning vets takes a bow-wow



Mayor Steve Walther with Brian Hogan (Partner & Clinical Director) and border terrier Burt

A VETERINARY Practice from the Black Country has been named as the best in the UK.

Blacks Vets Dudley Hospital help every creature from poorly pooches to under the weather hamsters and has now topped the charts for the second year running in the competition run by the VetHelpDirect.com directory.

The Best UK Vets awarded is presented to the veterinary practice that has been given the most four or five star online reviews by their clients.

Blacks Vets in Dudley finished in first place, with branches of the practice in Lye, Sedgley, Oldbury and Quinton, following in second, third, fifth and eighth place respectively.

Overwhelmed

Partner and clinical director Dr Brian Hogan, who was congratulated by Mayor of Dudley Councillor Steve Walther, said: "We are overwhelmed to receive this award for a second time. This really matters to us because it is

voted for by pet owners. As you can imagine to have such a high number of four and five star reviews has just blown us away."

Almost 600 of Blacks' clients went out of their way to leave a review. The award is based on reviews left by owners over the course of a year.

Customers are asked to review the practice based on five areas of care – respect for my animal, professionalism, friendliness, cleanliness and value for money.

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High Green, with St Peter's Church in distance, in 1837



Lichfield Street circa 1846, with its Tudor buildings



The Old Barrel inn, in Wolverhampton, from the 1870s

Book offering a glimpse of everyday life from city's past, is no accident

PEOPLE knocked down on their way to work, falling from ladders and boilers exploding – just some of the bizarre accidents from the 19th century included in a new book.

The publication is the work of Jane Smith, aged 69, from Perton, who has been interested in local history.

Three-and-a-half years ago someone asked her if there was anything apart from her usual area of expertise – Worfield in Shropshire – that she would like to study. She replied that she would like to study accidents and the seed of her book was sown. Her book is titled Accidents: Nineteenth Century Accidents In Wolverhampton, and Jane explained why she wanted to write it.

"Accidents happen to ordinary people, on an ordinary day, in an ordinary town," she said. "And when they do, the description of what happened is recorded and

MEMORY LANE

Report by Karl Aston

provides a snapshot of life as it was. It tells of people knocked down on their way to work, of cows stuck in shops, of steam boilers exploding. This is history up close – we are like eavesdroppers on people's lives."

The book on accidents in Wolverhampton is more than 500 pages long and is being stocked by Amazon.

She said: "My interest is not in the accident per se, but in the light the accident throws on everyday life. Such as the story of the lamplighter who was up a ladder lighting a gas lamp when the ladder was caught by a passing donkey cart. That is the story of a non-fatal accident which creates a strong visual image of a time gone by.

"Then there was Mrs Burrows, aged 70, minding her own business on Snow Hill in 1841 when two butchers from Birmingham were

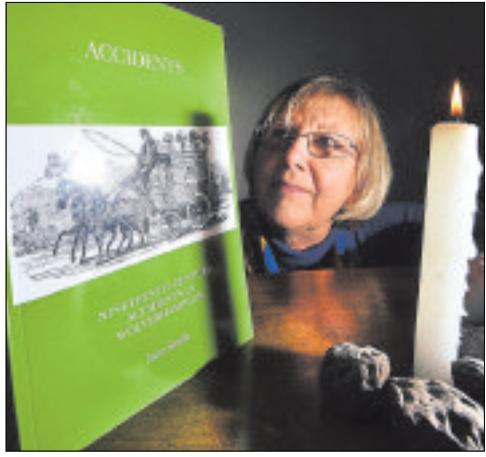
racing up the hill on their way home.

"One of them knocked Mrs Burrows over and killed her, but the riders weren't held to blame, the horse was, and a fine was duly placed on him or her."

The 19th century was a time of great change in manufacturing, transport and housing, said Jane, and with those changes came challenges, which often translated into people making mistakes. Jane said: "Sometimes people didn't understand the technology, they took risks, such as at Rough Hills Pit in 1861, when the head engineer was notified that there was a leak in a boiler.

"But rather than taking the boiler out of service for a proper repair, the head engineer fills the crack with wooden wedges and hemp and the boiler is put back into work. The explosion kills two men immediately.

Accidents: Nineteenth Century Accidents In Wolverhampton is published by Share Our Past Ltd and is available for £17.50.



Jane Smith, of Perton, with her book on accidents in Wolverhampton

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Diamond anniversary couple say patience is key to happy marriage

A COUPLE celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary have said patience is the key to a long and happy marriage.

Lewis and Mary Nock, from Brierley Hill, were just love struck youngsters when they met and have now been married for 60 years.

Mary got to know Lewis as she worked with his sister. One day she went to her house where she met her future husband for the first time and the rest was history.

They were married two years later at St Andrew's Church in Netherton, when Lewis was 22 and Mary 18.

The couple went on to have six

children, 15 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Mary, who worked in family support at Dudley Council before she retired and is now 78, said: "We are just more or less the same, like everyone else we have our ups and downs but you get over them."

"Neither of us smoke or drink so we don't really go out much to pubs or anything like that, though we do like a game of bingo."

On the secret to a long and happy marriage, Mary said: "Having a big family helps keep you together and you have to have a lot of patience."

"We have been very happy over the years."

Dave makes the cut as principal film censor

HE grew up in Dudley and has fond memories of watching Chitty Chitty Bang Bang as a youngster at the town's Odeon Cinema.

Now David Austin, brother of Dudley North MP Ian Austin, watches films for a living in his role as Britain's chief censor.

Earlier this month the 52-year-old took up his post as the new director of the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). He makes the final decision on the rating for every film released in the UK, and when you go to the cinema it is his signature you will see on screen shortly before the start of the movie.

His day-to-day work involves scrutinising every type of film, from rom-coms to horror flicks, from thrillers to pornography. He is charged with running the rule over some of the most gruesome and bloody violence recorded but Mr Austin says the sights he sees now are tame in comparison to what he witnessed in his previous job.

War

He spent 16 years working in the Foreign Office's Diplomatic Service, with one of his tasks being to help end war in the former Yugoslavia. That role – for which he received an OBE in 1999 – involved sitting at the table with Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in an attempt to negotiate peace. Milosevic was later charged with genocide.

"I got shot at," he says, rather matter-of-factly. "The final straw came in 1998 when I was away in Kosovo for a month. My daughter asked my wife if I had died. That's when I knew it was time for a change."

Mr Austin joined the BBFC in 2003, initially as an examiner. "It was a lot safer, although there are similarities with my diplomatic work," he said. "I was still analysing and making recommendations." In



Ex-diplomat David Austin

2014 the BBFC classified 955 films released in UK cinemas but the organisation also runs the rule over content for other platforms, including DVD, Blu-Ray, Netflix, Amazon Prime and online streaming sites such as YouTube and Vevo.

"Today we are classifying fewer DVDs, but we still looked at between 8,500 and 9,000 in 2014," said the father-of-two, who lives in west London.

"We are also now looking at a significant amount of content that will only be available online, which has certainly broadened our work."

The organisation has a staff of 42 and prides itself as the public's trusted guide to what is suitable for each age category.

"Our number one priority is the public," Mr Austin said. "Consultations give us a pretty good idea of what people expect from us and enable us to adjust our standards accordingly. I think we have such a high level of public trust."

Pride Awards deadline

LINES are now open to nominate people and groups for the Pride of Tipton Awards. RSA Academy, Sandwell Local Tipton office, Tipton Police and the Pride of Tipton Community Group have teamed up to recognise those who have gone the extra mile for the community. The deadline for nominations is 5pm tomorrow (Friday). Email pot@rsaacademy.org or call 0121 556 1351.



Diamond wedding couple Lewis and Mary Nock, from Pensnett, celebrate

Library events mark Shakespeare's death

THE 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death is being celebrated at Tipton library next week.

Visitors can take part in a history quiz and celebrate the anniversary in a series of events at the Owen Street building.

Historian Chris Smith will be holding a talk at the library on Thursday, April 14, starting at 10.30am, entitled 'Would you believe it?'

Tickets will need to be booked by calling 0121 557 1796.

Another event will be held on April 23 at the library to mark 400 years since Shakespeare died.

Organisers are also unveiling a print of what is thought to be the first photo of William Perry, the Tipper Slasher.

The photo will be unveiled at 11am by John Miller from the Tipton and Coseley Building Society and members of the William Perry Amateur Boxing Club.

There will be traditional refreshments, face painting and a number of special guests at the event which runs from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

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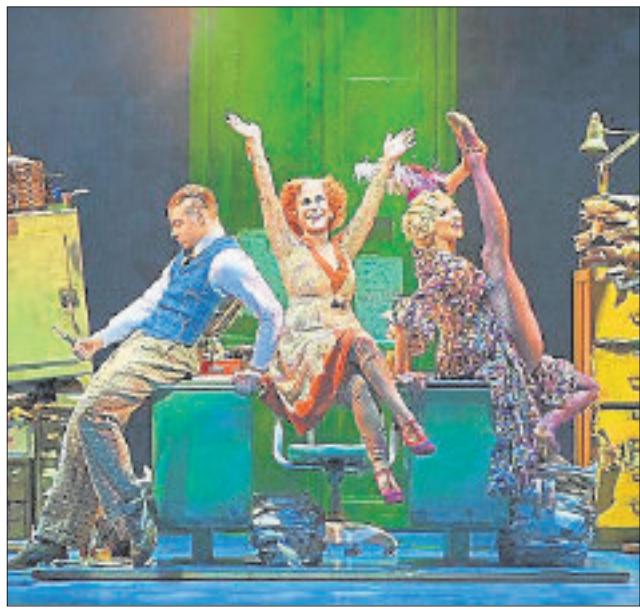
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Birds of a Feather star Lesley Joseph on the Grand Theatre stage



Lesley Joseph as Miss Hannigan



Miss Hannigan and little orphan Annie, Elise Blake, come face-to-face

Sun comes out for classic musical

Annie, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre by Alison Norton

THE sun certainly came out at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre earlier this week.

Nikolai Foster's superbly directed version of Annie the Musical opened to a packed audience, proving that we are still a sentimental bunch at heart.

The 1982 movie of the same name is a firm favourite, but can the stage adaptation possibly surpass the films? In my opinion, it certainly can and if anything, it is far more exciting and heart warming than either of the

big screen attempts. Having seen this production late last year starring Craig Revel Horwood as the wicked orphanage matron, Miss Hannigan, I simply could not wait to see one of our best-loved and funniest females, Lesley Joseph in the role and compare the two.

Lesley wins hands down, offering a superb comedy performance, perfect timing and who knew she could dance too?

Accent

With all the right moves she more than holds her own in what has to be a highlight of the show, the Easy Street number.

Granted Miss Joseph's accent is a little

REVIEW

more Chigwell than New York, but let's forgive and forget.

However, while the adults deliver polished performances, the real stars are the uber-talented tribe of, as the song does, 'Little Girls' who completely steal the show right from under their nose.

Eleven-year-old Elise Blake as Annie carries the whole show on very young shoulders, absolutely bringing the house down with a voice to die for and exceptional acting talent.

There are unbelievable strong performances from all of the orphans, but especially from Andie Jordan who at just seven is a shining star already.

Meanwhile, understudy Callum McArdle grabbed the chance to play Danny Warbucks with both hands and is every inch the billionaire destined to adopt the little red head, with smooth moves and a fine voice, while Holly Dale Spencer as Grace offers a beautifully refined performance and her outstanding soprano skills raise the rafters.

Nick Winston's choreography perfectly captures the feel of 1930s Broadway. The score features the likes of It's a Hard Knock Life,

I Think I'm Gonna Like It Here and You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile, guaranteed to have you dancing in the street.

Finally, there's Annie's unforgettable solo Tomorrow, which never fails to melt even the hardest heart. Add to that a super cute dog called Amber in the role of Sandy.

Perfect

They say never work with children and animals but in this case, they go towards creating the perfect musical.

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Luxury home could be yours for region of £2m

FIVE bedrooms, a luxurious lounge, spacious kitchen and beautiful garden offering splendid views of the countryside. It could all be yours - for close to £2 million.

This marvellous mansion could soon have new occupants after being put on the market.

Located in the idyllic Hagley countryside near Stourbridge, the property was so stunning it has attracted the television cameras, having previously featured on the Channel 4 show Multi-Million Pound Properties.

It was built from scratch by its current owners and looks fit for a million-pound high-flyer.

On its website, The Lee, Shaw Partnership, which is advertising the £1.85 million property for sale, describes it as having the perfect mix of classical elegance and contemporary style.

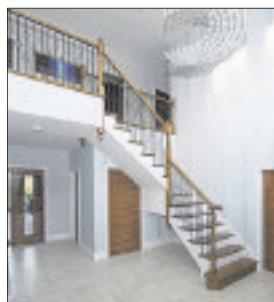
The house is guarded by a high brick wall and a grand gated entrance and it is not hard to envisage an Aston Martin or Lamborghini - or more likely both - pulling out to tour the surrounding countryside roads.

Walkway

Four of the five bedrooms are en suite, while in the garden there is a patio with room for plenty of outside seating, not to mention a Jacuzzi, and a lit walkway which offers a view of hills and fields for as far as the eye can see.

The minimalist kitchen makes it appear huge, with an oven and microwave built into the walls, small unit space and all white walls and floors. Large doors and a window above also provide stunning views into the garden.

There is also a games room, with a cinema screen and pool table, which like the lounge, is set out over wooden



Inside the sprawling home



The views from the £1.85m property



The five-bedroom home in the idyllic Hagley countryside

panel flooring. While much of the home caters for a life of luxury, there is also space for hard work with a study included.

Agents Lee, Shaw say: "This particularly special, award-winning and impressive house effortlessly mixes classical elegance with contemporary style and bespoke specification, extending to in excess of 5,000 sq ft of

accommodation. There is nothing like this property currently on the market."

"Built and just completed by the present owners, the construction, design and specification has been beautifully executed to an outstanding standard."

The property, in Middlefield Lane, is close to Hagley railway station and a short drive from the village centre.

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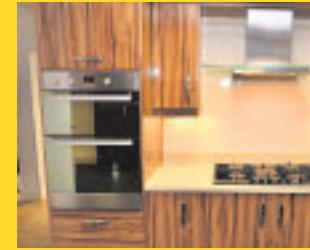
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DAYS: 2 DEPARTS: July 16

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- ✓ Single rooms subject to availability (supplement applies)

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Cornwall, St Ives, Padstow and Falmouth

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DAYS: 4 DEPARTS: May 6, Jun 17

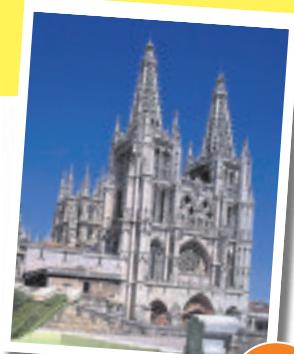
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Opening Night

Twelfth Night preview
See Page 25



**NATIVE
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Entertainment Unleashed



Miracle man

Derren Brown, Page 25

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Shakespeare in a rock 'n' roll riot



Oliver Dimsdale (Toby Belch), Jonathan Broadbent (Orsino) and Syreeta Kumar (Olivia) in Filter's version of Twelfth Night

FOLLOWING a run in New York and an extensive tour of India, Filter Theatre mark 400 years since William Shakespeare's death by bringing their critically-acclaimed production of Twelfth Night to Birmingham Repertory Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, April 16.

This story of romance, satire and mistaken identity is crafted into one of the more exciting and accessible Shakespeare productions of recent

years. Olivia's puritanical household clashes head on with Sir Toby Belch's insatiable appetite for drunken debauchery as the deluded Malvolio has an extraordinary transformation in this new take on the classic play.

Originally commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company's former artistic director Michael Boyd as part of their Complete Works Festival, Filter's characteristically radical and riotous interpretation reaffirms their

reputation as one of the most inventive theatre companies.

They promise that no two shows will be the same with decisions taken on the hoof as the narrative unfolds each night. In this informal production the stage is covered in cables, technical equipment, amplifiers and musical instruments that enable Filter to create the play in what promises to be more akin to a rock concert than classic theatre.

You'll believe in a Miracle

MASTER of illusion Derren Brown is bringing his latest show, Miracle, to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to amaze and baffle audiences.

Previous shows Svengali and Infamous have left packed venues stunned. This will be his seventh production since 2003 but the award-winning showman, who uses psychology to create the illusion of supernatural powers, is giving few clues on what to expect this time.

"As ever, I ask people to keep the contents of the show a secret," says the two-time Olivier Award winner.

"But I can certainly say that this show has a more philosophical flavour and looks at ways of thinking that may make us happier."

"In some ways it's the boldest, most contentious show yet. But audiences are responding well to it and I just love doing it — it's quite a rollercoaster."

Having performed to one and a half million people over 13 years, Croydon-born Brown says the magic genre can continue to break boundaries.

"Magic is a very childish thing at heart: the quickest, most fraudulent route to impressing people. It's based in dishonesty. So you have to work harder to make it have artistic merit or relevance."

"I am often dishonest in my techniques but I'm always honest about my dishonesty."

Miracle will be at the Grand from Monday to Saturday, April 16.

'It's my boldest show yet'



Top of the Pops with The Rezillos

A BAND that put a smile on the faces of New Wave fans back in the 70s are back, as Scottish outfit The Rezillos have a gig at Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms tomorrow night (Friday).

Still fronted by Fay Fife and Eugene Reynolds, the band lit up the punk era with their day-glo blend of 60s-inspired sci-fi rock 'n' roll with such songs as Top Of The Pops and Flying Saucer Attack, before mutating into The Rezillos.

That's the same night that rising star Jack Garratt has sold-out the O2 Institute in Birmingham. The Digbeth venue will also have a full house for Pvriss on Saturday and Funeral For A Friend on Wednesday.

Movie music night with Oscar winner

HOLLYWOOD'S most in-demand composer, Hans Zimmer, is coming to Birmingham's Barclaycard Arena on Tuesday for one of only two UK shows.

The German-born musician has composed the soundtracks to blockbusters such as Inception, Interstellar, The Dark Knight Trilogy, Gladiator, 12 Years a Slave, The Lion King, Pirates of the Caribbean and many more. Zimmer's studio band will be appearing with Lebo M, known for his vocals on Zimmer's Academy Award-winning score for Disney's The Lion King, as well as an orchestra and choir, with over 70 musicians on stage.

Zappa guitarist in special tribute gig

A PUNK diva plus tributes to a glam rock legend and two of rock's great mavericks will feature at Bilston's Robin 2 venue.

New Wave 80s star Hazel O'Connor, whose movie Breaking Glass provided hit singles Eighth Day and the poignant Will You, teams up with former Belle Stars saxophonist Claire Hirst at the Mount Pleasant venue tonight (Thursday).

T Rextasy take fans back to the 70s heyday of Marc Bolan on Saturday and on Sunday the Muffin Men pay tribute to Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart's Magic Band with Zappa/Beefheart guitarist Denny Walley AKA Feelers Rebo.

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CHOICE



Ant & Dec

Britain's Got Talent (ITV, 7pm)

New series. Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams take their seats on the judges' panel as the nationwide variety talent show returns for its tenth series, giving another crop of would-be comedians, contortionists, street-dance outfits and all-round entertainers a chance to wow the all-star panel - and the viewers at home - with their most prized skills. This year, the contest looks set to feature as wide a variety of acts as ever, including a one-man band on stilts, puppetry, archery and an orchestra with a twist, and Simon has promised that the winner will receive not only a £250,000 cash prize and a place in the Royal Variety Show, but also a 'special surprise' he has described as 'priceless'.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00 Saturday Kitchen** Live. **11.30 MasterChef.** (R) **12.00 BBC News; Weather.** **12.10 Football Focus.** **12.50 Saturday Sportsday.** **1.00 Kelly Holmes: My Marathon Story.** **1.30 Golf: The Masters Highlights.** **2.30 Bargain Hunt.** (R) **3.15 Escape to the Country.** (R) **4.00 Final Score.** **5.20 Now You See It.** (R) **5.50 BBC News.**

6.00 Regional Programme.

6.10 Can't Touch This. A karate instructor, a would-be Red Coat, and a baker from Armagh with a territorial sense of direction are among the 16 contestants battling their way through a giant obstacle course filled with puzzles that are just out of reach. If the competitors are able to lay hands on any of the goodies within, they can take them home, including a grand prize that requires a giant leap of faith to claim. Presented by Zoe Ball and Ashley Banjo, with narration by Sue Perkins.

7.00 The Voice UK. This year's contest draws to a close as the four most successful contestants take to the stage one last time in the grand final. Having progressed through seven weeks of blind auditions, two battle rounds, two knockout stages and two live shows, the would-be stars face the ultimate test of their vocal abilities, with the winner earning themselves a recording contract. Superstar coaches Will.i.am, Ricky Wilson, Paloma Faith and Boy George perform together one final time as fans at home cast their votes to determine which would-be pop icon will claim the title of The Voice UK 2016. Last in the series.

9.00 Casualty. Jacob enlists an unlikely ally to help him track down a dangerous drug dealer, and Big Mac becomes increasingly reliant on painkillers. Medical drama, starring Charles Venn.

9.50 The National Lottery Live.

10.00 BBC News; Weather.

10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including West Ham United v Arsenal at Upton Park; National Lottery Update.

11.45 Film: Deja Vu. (2006) Sci-fi thriller, starring Denzel Washington and Paula Patton.

1.40 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45 BBC News.**

BBC2

6.25 Film: Sister Kenny. (1946) Fact-based drama, starring Rosalind Russell.

8.20 Film: Goodbye, Mr Chips. (1939) Period drama, with Robert Donat. **10.10 Horner Under the Hammer.** (R) **11.10 Laurel and Hardy.** (R) **12.00 Film:** From Venice to Istanbul. (1989) The English king leads his armies into battle to reclaim control of France. Adaptation of Shakespeare's historical play, directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh, with Derek Jacobi. **3.15 Flog It!** (R) **4.00 Bake Off: Creme de la Creme.** (R) **5.00 World's Weirdest Events.** (R)

6.00 Tribes, Predators & Me. Gordon Buchanan travels around the world, learning traditional hunting methods from members of tribal cultures and joining them in pursuing dangerous predators. (R)

7.00 Dad's Army. Corporal Jones misplaces £500 donated by local shopkeepers to provide a new canteen for servicemen, so the platoon tries to help him remember what he did with it. Comedy first broadcast in 1972, starring Clive Dunn, John Le Mesurier and Arthur Lowe. (R)

7.30 Golf: The Masters Live. Hazel Street, the daughter of the judge of the third day from the August National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year continues. While conditions on this famous course are notoriously difficult, Jan Spieh made light of such matters last year on his way to winning his first Major, establishing a new Masters record for the lowest 54-hole score, and helping himself to a four-shot lead over Justin Rose in the process. While Spieh hasn't been quiet at the best in the early part of this year, the American is still among the favourites, with the European charge led by former world number one, Rory McIlroy. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken Brown and Andrew Cotter. Subsequent programmes subject to change.

12.00 Film: The Mummy. (1959) An ancient Egyptian priest returns to life to kill those who have desecrated the 4,000-year-old sacred tomb of a princess. Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. **1.25 Film:** Stark Raving Mad. (2002) Crime comedy, starring Sean William Scott and Tim Shang. **3.00 This is BBC Two.** Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 Scrambled! Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.15 Scrambled!** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25 Scrambled!** Bruno Dan: Trek's Adventure. (R) **6.35 Scrambled!** Bruno Dan: Trek's Adventure. (R) **6.50 Scrambled!** Signed Stories. (R) **6.55 Scrambled!** Sooty. (R) **7.05 Scrambled!** Super 4. (R) **7.15 Scrambled!** Scrambled! 7.35 Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **7.50 Scrambled!** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10 Scrambled!** Nerds & Monsters. (R) **8.30 Scrambled!** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **9.05 Scrambled!** The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **9.25 Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **10.15 Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **11.15 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **12.15 ITV News; Weather.** **12.25 The Jeremy Kyle Show.** (R) **1.25 Judge Rinder.** (R) **2.25 The Chase.** (R) **3.25 Film:** Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang. (2010) **5.30 Regional Programme.** **Weather.** **5.45 ITV News; Weather.**

6.00 You've Been Framed! XXL. Harry Hart presents an all-new, large-scale edition of the show, revisiting some of the best mishaps, hijinks and side-splitting disasters captured on video by internet viewers.

7.00 Britain's Got Talent. New series. Judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and David Walliams take up their places on the judges' panel as the nationwide talent show returns for its tenth edition.

8.25 You're Back in the Room. Coronation Street stars Anthony Cotton and Jennie McAlpine join Phillip Schofield and Keith Barry as five more hypnotised strangers team up to win a potential £25,000. Last in the series.

9.25 Film: The Fast and the Furious. (2001) An undercover cop infiltrates the world of illegal street racing in search of a hijacking ring, but starts to question his loyalties. Thriller, starring Vin Diesel and Paul Walker.

10.25 ITV News; Weather.

10.40 Film: The Fast and the Furious. (2001) Concludes.

11.40 The Cube. Derry-Londonderry radiographer Lindsey is determined to stay calm under pressure, followed by Yorkshireman Keith - the oldest person to have appeared on the show. (R)

12.40 Jackpot247. **3.00 Murder, She Wrote.** (R) **3.50 ITV Nightscreen.**

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. (R) **6.40 How I Met Your Mother.** (R) **7.05 Freddie World Tour.** **7.30 Tarawera Ultra Marathon.** **7.55 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.25 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **9.00 The Grand National.** **11.00 Grand National Brunch - From the Grand National.** **2.00 The Grand National.** Live from Aintree. Including the 5.15 Crabbie's Grand National Steeple Chase (4m 2 1/20).

6.30 Speed with Guy Martin. The motorcycle fan takes on the challenge of building the world's fastest soapbox racer in an attempt to set a new speed record using just the pull of gravity and a tarmac road. To get to grips with going blisteringly fast on a public road, Guy tries his hand at street luge with former global champion Helene Schmitz, before joining his team of engineers to explore the science of rolling resistance and the importance of tyre pressure. Armed with what they believe to be the perfect formula, they produce a unique soapbox cart inspired by Mother Nature and, after training with the team GB women's bobsled pair, confidence is high - but are disaster and mayhem just around the corner? Last in the series. (R)

7.30 Channel 4 News.

8.00 Film: Johnny English Reborn. (2011) A bumbling secret agent retires to a Tibetan monastery in disgrace after a mission goes wrong. He is lured out of seclusion by the chance to redeem himself when his former bosses seek his help in foiling an attempt to assassinate the premier of China. Spy comedy sequel, starring Rowan Atkinson, Gillian Anderson, Rosamund Pike and Dominic West.

10.00 Film: Die Hard. (1988) A New York cop battles armed men who have taken over a Los Angeles skyscraper where his wife is working on Christmas Eve. Action thriller, starring Bruce Willis and Alan Rickman.

12.35 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.30 Hollyoaks.** Omnibus. Nancy accuses Darren of gambling again. (R) **3.35 Hugh's Good Foods: Best Bites.** (R) **3.45 Location, Location, Location.** (R) **4.40 Kirstie's Vintage Gems.** (R) **4.55 Selling Houses with Amanda Lamb.** **5.50 How I Met Your Mother.** (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **8.55 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** **9.30 The Saturday Show Live.** **11.30 Police Interceptors: Under Attack.** (R) **12.25 Police Interceptors: Dog Squad.** (R) **1.20 Police Interceptors: Dog Pursuit.** (R) **2.20 Behind Closed Doors.** (R) **3.20 GPs: Behind Closed Doors.** (R) **4.15 GPs: Behind Closed Doors.** (R) **5.10 GPs: Behind Closed Doors.** (R)

6.05 NCIS. Los Angeles. Kensi goes undercover as a highly trained cat burglar to find out why a sophisticated thief is planning to steal antiquities from a museum base.

7.00 NCIS: New Orleans. Don Lambert, an accountant who offered to testify against weapons trafficker Hugo Garza, dies after slipping away from the Federal Marshals tasked with keeping him safe ahead of the trial. In an attempt to ensure justice is done, Pride offers to personally escort a replacement witness - Lambert's former business partner - to the trial in Texas. However, the killer is still out there, and it's not long before Pride, Sonja and their witness face an ambush. Naval crime drama, starring Scott Bakula.

8.00 NCIS. The team investigates the cause of a hit-and-run incident in which a Petty Officer has been killed. Meanwhile, Gibbs works to clear a Navy Hospital Corpsman.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 The Championship: Football League Tonight. Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the weekend's matches from the Championship, including Burnley v Leeds United and Middlesbrough v Preston North End.

10.00 Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. A round-up of the latest matches in League One and League Two, including Scunthorpe United v Burton Albion, Wigan Athletic v Coventry City and Northampton Town v Bristol Rovers.

10.30 NCIS. A US Navy captain is held hostage in his own office while his wife and blind daughter are abducted, and the kidnappers try to extort a large sum of money from him for their release. (R)

11.25 NCIS. (R)

12.15 SuperCasino. **3.10 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit.** (R) **4.40 Divine Designs.** (R) **5.05 HouseBusters.** (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 Treasures of the Indus **8.00 Human Planet** **9.00 Follow the Money** **11.00 The Joy of the Guitar** **12.00 The Kinks at the BBC** **1.30 Top of the Pops: 1981** **1.35 Nut Rodgers: The Hitmaker** **2.35 The Joy of the Guitar** **3.35 Close**

11.15 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway **12.45 The Almost Impossible Gameshow** **1.40 Scorpion** **2.40 Celebrity Catchphrase** **3.40 Britain's Got More Talent** **4.45 Film:** King Kong. (2005) **5.45 FYI Daily 5.50 Film:** King Kong. (2005) **6.25 Britain's Got More Talent** **7.25 Family Guy** **8.25 The Cleveland Show** **9.15 Total** **10.00 American Dad!** **11.25 @elephant** **1.00 The Cleveland Show** **1.55 Totem** **2.20 Planet's Funniest Animals** **2.45 The Hot Desk** **3.25 Zar Larsson** **3.55 Teleshopping** **5.55 ITV2 Nightscreen**

ITV3

2.15 Goodnight Mister Tom **4.25 Film:** Columbo: Fade in to Murder (1976) **6.00 Agatha Christie's Marple** **8.00 Foyle's War** **10.20 Celeste** **11.25 The Big Guy** **11.35 The American Dad!** **12.35 @elephant** **1.00 The Cleveland Show** **1.55 Totem** **2.20 Planet's Funniest Animals** **2.45 The Hot Desk** **3.25 Zar Larsson** **3.55 Teleshopping**

ITV4

3.00 FYI Daily 3.05 Film: Police Academy: Back to Training (1986) **3.45 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **4.45 FYI Daily 5.00 Film:** From Russia with Love (1963) **5.05 The Motorport Mavericks** **7.10 The Big Fish Off** **8.15 Film:** Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow (1994) **9.15 FYI Daily 9.20 Film:** Police Academy 7: Mission to Moscow (1994) **10.00 FYI Film:** Passenger 57 (1992) **11.00 FYI Daily 11.05 Film:** Passenger 57 (1992) **11.45 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **12.45 FYI Daily 12.50 Film:** A Dangerous Man (2010) **1.40 Minder** **2.35 Movies Now** **2.40 ITV4 Nightscreen** **3.00 Teleshopping**

4

12.00 How I Met Your Mother **1.00 Brooklyn Nine-Nine** **2.00 Film:** Hop (2011) **4.00 Ice Age: The Great Egg-Scapade** **4.25 The Goldbergs** **6.00 The Big Bang Theory** **9.00 FYI Film:** Easy A (2010) **10.50 Gogglebox** **1.00 Rude Tube** **2.00 The IT Crowd** **3.00 How I Met Your Mother** **3.45 New Girl** **4.30 Revenge**

Film4

11.00 Picture Perfect (1997) **1.00 Turner & Hooch (1989)** **3.00 Dunston Checks In (1996)** **4.40 Mirror Mirror (2012)** **6.45 Starman (1984)** **9.00 I, Robot (2004)**

11.15 The Divide (2011) **1.30 Max Payne (2008)** **3.35 Close**



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CHOICE



Leanne Best

Undercover (BBC1, 9pm)

Maya's fight for justice becomes a serious threat to the establishment, setting out to bring shocking secrets to light. Nick is consumed with guilt as he recalls his time as an undercover police officer, and his infiltration of an anti-racist organisation led to his first meeting with his wife. When a violent incident erupted during a march and one of the leading activists was attacked, Nick was left struggling to reconcile his feelings for Maya and his loyalty to the police force he serves, but has begun to question. Sophie Okonedo, Adrian Lester, Tamara Lawrence, Daniel Ezra, Shannon Hayes, Vincent Regan, Alastair Petrie, Mark Bonnar, Derek Riddell, Clare Holman, Adrian Schiller and Leanne Best star.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **2.15** Secret Britain. (R) **3.15** Escaping the Country. (R) **4.00** Points of View. **4.15** Songs of Praise. **5.00** Life in the Air. **6.00** Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army and Me. Paul reads a Bible story to a room full of children, and gets a glimpse of the future when he tries on an age simulation suit to experience the physical demands of growing old. **6.30** BBC News. **6.50** Regional Programme. **7.00** Countryfile. John Craven follows LS Lowry's journeys around Northumberland, accompanied by the man who used to draw him on his train, and meets the last of Berwick's traditional fishermen, a subject often painted by the artist. Ellie Harrison investigates how to conserve moorland and meets a heavy horse breeder, while Charlotte Smith reports on domestic violence in isolated rural areas. Plus, the second of this year's Farming Heroes nominees. Including Weather For The Week Ahead. **8.00** Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce and the team visit Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, where they value an ugly family heirloom that turns out to have an important heritage – and a surprising value. **9.00** Undercover. Maya threatens to expose secrets in the establishment, while Nick is consumed with guilt as he recalls his time as an undercover police officer and his first meeting with his wife. **10.00** BBC News. **10.20** Regional Programme. **10.30** Match of the Day 2. Highlights of the latest Premier League matches, featuring Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester United and Sunderland v Leicester City. **11.40** Film: **The Hot Chick**. (2002) A Petty crook and a snooty cheerleader swap bodies, leaving the thief free to indulge in a crime spree while posing as a go-go dancer. Comedy, with Rob Schneider and Rachel McAdams. **1.15** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 Great British Garden Revival. (R) **7.15** This Farming Life. (R) **8.45** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.15** Countryfile. (R) **10.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.45** The Big Dining Event. (R) **12.30** Match of the Day 2. Extra **1.00** Triathlon. **2.50** Live Gymnastics: British Championships. Coverage of the Artistic Gymnastics British Championships from Liverpool. **5.00** The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure. (R) **6.00** Great British Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo sets off from Newcastle on the final leg of his journey from Derby to Lindisfarne, finding out about the world's earliest swing bridge and its inventor William Armstrong. He also travels by boat from the port of Seahouses to examine the story of lighthouse keeper's daughter Grace Darling, who, along with her father, rescued nine people from tumultuous seas in 1838. On the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Michael explores the lime kilns and finds out how Christianity spread from across northern England in the 7th century. (R) **6.30** Golf: The Masters. Hazel Speith introduces coverage of the fourth and final day from the Augusta National in Georgia, as the opening Major of the year reaches a conclusion. Jordan Spieth started the final day four shots ahead of his nearest rival last year and showed no signs of any nerves affecting his game, eventually holding that advantage ahead of Phil Mickelson and Justin Rose, who were tied for second. Speith also equalled the lowest 72-hole total for the Masters and set the record for the most birdies for the week, confirming his rise to fame and clinching his first Major. Rose finished as the highest-placed European, with fellow countrymen Ian Poulter and Paul Casey also in the top 10, along with Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy and Hideki Matsuyama of Japan. With commentary by Peter Alliss, Ken and Andrew Cottier. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **12.00** The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story. (R) **12.40** Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **1.35** Holby City. Serena's personal involvement with a patient affects her professional judgement. (R) **2.35** This Is BBC Two. Preview of upcoming programmes.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.15** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.50** Soothi (R) **7.00** Stories. (R) **7.15** Little Learners. (R) **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrabble. (R) **7.35** Scrambled!: Mr Bean's Animated Series. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Horrid Henry. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: Nerds & Monsters. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.30** ITV News: Weather. **12.45** River Monsters. (R) **1.50** Big Star's Little Star. (R) **2.50** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **3.50** Film: Licence to Kill. (1989) James Bond spy thriller. **6.30** Regional Programme; Weather. **6.45** ITV News: Weather. **7.00** The Chase Celebrity Special. Charlie Brooks, Richard Whitehead, Shappi Khorsandi and David Dickinson work as a team to take on a quiz genius and secure a cash prize for charity. Presented by Bradley Walsh. **8.00** The Durrells. Larry falls dangerously ill, and Theo and his neighbour put their rudimentary medical skills to the task of saving him. Spiros brings good news from a surprising source. **9.00** Home Fires. Laura is publicly disgraced when news of the Bowers' divorce hits the papers, with grave consequences for the surgery and her friendship with Tom. Pat is tempted by her feelings for Marek while Bob is in hospital. Steph is delighted when Stan returns home on leave, but the reunion is overshadowed by his fears of invasion. Frances discovers a secret at the reading of the will. **10.05** ITV News: Weather. **10.20** 100 Year Old Drivers. On the road with some of Britain's oldest motorists, including a bomber command veteran who drives to the betting shop every day. (R) **11.20** Murder, She Wrote. Jessica visits a friend's Arizona ranch – but as soon as she arrives, the community is plunged into disarray by a local psychic's sinister predictions. (R) **12.15** Jackpot247. **3.00** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

Preview of upcoming programmes.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 How I Met Your Mother. (R) **6.40** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Family. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **7.40** Little Miss Princess. (R) **7.55** Pin Ahoy! (R) **8.10** Plaza and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.05** Jelly Jamm. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** The Champions: Football League Tonight. (R) **11.30** Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. (R) **12.00** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.00** Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild UK. (R) **2.00** Film: Eight Below. (2006) Disney canine adventure, starring Paul Walker. **4.20** Film: The Haunted Mansion. (2003) Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy. **6.30** Channel 4 News. **7.00** The Secret Life of the Zoo. With numbers in the wild dwindling rapidly, Chester Zoo's black rhino breeding programme is a key part of preserving the species. In this episode, black rhino Kitani is introduced to new mate Magadi, but with injury a high risk during mating, keeper Babs is concerned that Kitani may struggle to defend herself, since she lost her horn after the death of her calf. Meanwhile, there's a surprise birth in the orangutan house, and older sibling Tutti has to fend for herself and set out on the road to independence. Last in the series. (R) **8.00** Hidden History by Drone. Tony Robinson presents the first of two programmes using drones to shoot aerial footage of some of Britain's most off-the-beaten-track locations. **9.00** Home Fires. Laura is publicly disgraced when news of the Bowers' divorce hits the papers, with grave consequences for the surgery and her friendship with Tom. Pat is tempted by her feelings for Marek while Bob is in hospital. Steph is delighted when Stan returns home on leave, but the reunion is overshadowed by his fears of invasion. Frances discovers a secret at the reading of the will. **10.05** ITV News: Weather. **10.20** 100 Year Old Drivers. On the road with some of Britain's oldest motorists, including a bomber command veteran who drives to the betting shop every day. (R) **11.20** Murder, She Wrote. Jessica visits a friend's Arizona ranch – but as soon as she arrives, the community is plunged into disarray by a local psychic's sinister predictions. (R) **12.15** Jackpot247. **3.00** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

Preview of upcoming programmes.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Ticky Toc. (R) **6.55** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.05** Roobarb and Custard Too. **7.15** The Wombles. (R) **7.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Miss Princess. (R) **7.55** Pin Ahoy! (R) **8.10** Plaza and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.50** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.05** Jelly Jamm. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** The Champions: Football League Tonight. (R) **11.30** Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. (R) **12.00** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.00** Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild UK. (R) **2.00** Film: Eight Below. (2006) Disney canine adventure, starring Paul Walker. **4.20** Film: The Haunted Mansion. (2003) Comedy, starring Eddie Murphy. **6.00** Now That's Funny! A collection of internet-sourced videos with a family-friendly hook, featuring failed celebrities and dinosaur attacks. Last in the series. **7.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. Agents Paul and Steve face a moral dilemma in South London, when they have been instructed to evict it on his way to a funeral. (R) **8.00** Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas. This week's acts include a horning performance using a needle and thread, some unusual card tricks, and a mentalist illusion using a phone book and a sword. **8.55** 5 News Weekend. **9.00** Film: The Town. (2010) Premiere. A thief takes a bank manager hostage while he and his gang make off with the cash, only to later learn she lives in the same neighbourhood as him. As FBI agents close in, he tries to convince her to make sure she cannot identify him, but as he falls in love with her, he considers changing his ways – risking the attack against him. As Ralph and Cynthia try to find a way to protect him, Simla is devastated by a Russian billionaire. **9.00** Indian Summers. A badly burned Lord Hawthorne demands Adam be arrested for the attack against him. As Ralph and Cynthia try to find a way to protect him, Simla is devastated by a Russian billionaire. **10.00** Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R) **11.05** Film: **Insidious: Chapter 2**. (2013) **1.05** Embarrassing Bodies Down Under. (R) **2.00** The People Next Door. (R) **2.55** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four **7.00** Plácido Domingo at the BBC. **8.00** Pappano's Classical Voices. **9.00** Horizon: Solar Storms – The Threat to Planet Earth. **10.00** The Sky at Night. **10.30** Mission to Mars: A Horizon Special. **11.30** Cosmonauts: How Russia Won the Space Race. **1.00** The Bridge: The Big 50 Years Across the Fourth. **2.00** The World's Most Beautiful Eggs: The Genius of Carl Fabergé. **3.00** Plácido Domingo at the BBC. **4.00** Close ITV2 **11.30** **ITV3** **1.55** FYI Daily. **2.00** Film: Clockwise (1986). **2.55** Agatha Christie's Mistletoe and Murder. **3.00** Martin. **8.00** The Cruise Ship. **8.30** Royal Stories. **9.00** Great Estates of Scotland. **10.15** Film: Changeling (2008). **11.15** FYI Daily. **12.00** Film: Changeling (2008). **1.05** The Kindness of Strangers. **2.25** Wycife. **3.20** Totally Bonkers. **3.50** Guinness World Records. **4.15** Pixie Lott: The Hot Desk. **2.25** Telechopping. **5.55** TV2 Nightscreen. **11.30** **ITV4** **1.45** FYI Daily. **2.00** Film: Clockwise (1986). **2.55** Agatha Christie's Mistletoe and Murder. **3.00** Martin. **8.00** The Cruise Ship. **8.30** Royal Stories. **9.00** Great Estates of Scotland. **10.15** Film: Changeling (2008). **11.15** FYI Daily. **12.00** Film: Changeling (2008). **1.05** The Kindness of Strangers. **2.25** Wycife. **3.20** Totally Bonkers. **3.50** Guinness World Records. **4.15** Pixie Lott: The Hot Desk. **2.25** Telechopping. **5.55** TV2 Nightscreen. **11.30** **E4** **2.35** The Goldbergs. **4.00** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts. **4.10** Film: Bride Wars (2009). **6.00** The Big Bang Theory. **9.00** Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. **10.00** Film: Colombiana (2011). **12.05** The IT Crowd. **1.10** The Aliens. **2.15** The Moon. **3.00** Film: Gulliver's Travels (2010). **2.40** ParNorman (2012). **4.30** Lemon. **5.00** Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004). **6.35** Snow White & the Huntsman (2012). **9.00** The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (2013). **11.45** How I Live Now (2013). **1.50** Riff Raff (1990).

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MONDAY

A Teacher's Obsession, Channel 5, 3.20pm

A lacrosse star is kicked off the team until she can improve her grades, leading to a new teacher taking a special interest in helping her – but that interest soon turns disturbing and threatens the girl's entire future. Thriller, starring Molly Hagan. (2015)

TUESDAY

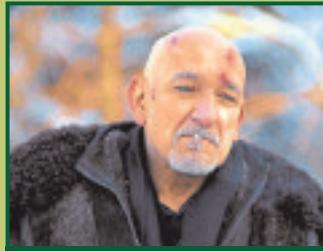
Fatal Performance, Channel 5, 3.20pm

An aspiring actress, working as a waitress, is offered a lucrative contract to impersonate the wife of a businessman during a prestigious reception event in their home. However, she soon learns the devious truth behind the proposal and what seemed like a simple job soon turns into a nightmare scenario. Thriller, starring Nicholle Tom and David Palfrey. (2013)

WEDNESDAY

Badge of Betrayal, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman discovers her supposedly dead son is still alive, his demise having been faked by her ex-husband as part of an elaborate plot to destroy her life. However, finding the evidence to prove her story turns out to be a difficult challenge. Thriller, starring Julie Benz and Samantha Ferris. (2014)



Transsiberian, Friday, BBC2, 11.05pm

THURSDAY

My Gal Sunday, Channel 5, 3.25pm

The daughter of a secret service agent marries a former politician, and together they set up a private detective agency. She faces a personal case when her parents are abducted and the kidnappers demand the release of an imprisoned hitman, and sets out to identify the mysterious criminals. Crime drama, starring Rachel Blanchard. (2013)

FRIDAY

Transsiberian, BBC2, 11.05pm

American couple Roy and Jessie are heading from China to Moscow on the Transsiberian railway when they befriend fellow travellers Carlos and Abby. However, when Roy fails to board the train following a station stop, Jessie begins to suspect her new travelling companions are harbouring a deadly secret. Thriller, starring Woody Harrelson, Emily Mortimer, Kate Mara and Ben Kingsley. (2008)

There's more to the new case than meets the eye

It's been an incredible year for Suranne Jones. The actress, who first rose to fame as the feisty Karen McDonald in Coronation Street, had the nation hooked with her performance as a woman scorned in the BBC drama Doctor Foster, which earned her a National TV Award and a recent Bafta nomination.

And if that wasn't enough, she also gave birth to her first child last month.

However, any worries that new motherhood would keep her off our screens for a while can be put to rest, as this week she returns in a new three-part special of police drama Scott & Bailey.

It's a project that is close to Suranne's heart – not only did the series give her the role of hot-headed Manchester detective Rachel Bailey, the actress also conceived the idea for the series with her former Corrie co-star Sally Lindsay (who is also returning in the role of Rachel's sister Alison).

The characters of Bailey and her more level-headed colleague Janet

Scott (Lesley Sharp) were then developed by award-winning writer Sally Wainwright, who has since gone on to create another acclaimed series about a complicated female cop, Happy Valley.

Over the course of the previous four series, we've seen Scott and Bailey tackle all manner of grisly crimes, while also dealing with their turbulent personal lives, but we're promised that while it may be shorter than usual, this new fifth series is going to test them more than ever.

Executive producer Nicola Shindler says: "We're delighted to be returning to Scott & Bailey with an investigation that will have everlasting consequences for the characters. This series is more ambitious and sinister than ever before and the concept of a three-part story allows us the opportunity to tackle a story of epic scale and ambition."

As regular viewers will remember, the last series ended with the retirement of DCI Gill Murray – and following a 12-month secondment to Vice, Rachel is back in Syndicate 9.

and ready to step up to the challenge of becoming acting D.I.

Janet is glad to have her mate back, even if she does feel that their friendship has been somewhat neglected – Rachel definitely lost some points when she failed to respond to a text about Janet breaking up with her boyfriend.

The bonding may have to wait though, as the cops look into the gruesome murder of Michael Edgerton. Rachel leads the investigation under the watchful eye of Julie Dodson (Pippa Haywood), but they're not the only ones taking an interest in the case, as a teenage boy watches a clip of the crime on the 'dark net'. It becomes clear that a game is being played – and Syndicate 9 need to find the next victim before the killer does.

Meanwhile, Janet is thrown into turmoil when Taisi (Harriet Waters) is arrested, and for once it looks like Rachel's going to have to use her friend, rather than the other way around.



Suranne Jones and Lesley Sharp star, Scott & Bailey, Wednesday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Into the Wild with Gordon Buchanan

BBC2, 6.30pm

New series. The film-maker reveals the extent of Scotland's wildlife, taking well-known faces on an adventure in which they observe some of the UK's most iconic species. In the first programme Gordon is joined by Alastair Campbell for a trip to the Western Isles, including the Isle of Mull, where Gordon grew up, and Tiree, where Alastair spent much of his childhood. The pair go in search of elusive otters and discover an unconventional way of attracting seals, while also getting up close with sea eagles and puffins.

TUESDAY

Drive

ITV, 9pm

While we wait for the re-launched Top Gear and Jeremy Clarkson's rival motor show on Amazon, Vernon Kay is doing a fine job of keeping petrolheads happy with this gas-guzzling challenge. Once more he puts eight celebrity racing rookies, including Professor Green, Johnny Vegas and Angus Deayton, through their paces. This time they have to contend with extreme off-road buggies, and tackle a supersized obstacle course. The two at the back of the pack then face a fight for survival in

the Night Race, with the slowest eliminated from the competition

WEDNESDAY

Tonight at the London Palladium

ITV, 8pm

New series. Actor and presenter Bradley Walsh entertains audiences at the Palladium with a variety show featuring stars from music and comedy, as well as a host of specialty acts from around the world. The first edition's line-up of confirmed guests includes Italian classical tenor Andrea Bocelli, singer-songwriter Birdy, and Irish comedian Tommy Tiernan. Plus, there is music from the West End with the cast of Motown the Musical, and a jaw-dropping performance by motorcycle stunt show, The Globe of Death.

Five Star Babies: Inside

the Portland Hospital

BBC2, 9pm

An exclusive glimpse inside the UK's only private maternity hospital, where women from Victoria Beckham to the Duchess of York have paid a premium for the ultimate pampered birth. This edition

reveals how Portland Hospital's consultants, midwives, chefs and cleaners serve parents, including high-society 'It' Girl' Hui, who admits she is afraid of giving birth naturally. Scottish nurse Pat insists that she is not star struck but 'baby struck' as she looks after the newborns of celebrities and royalty, and the Countess of Bradford reveals the impact of her career as a consultant on her social life.



Drive, Tuesday, ITV, 9pm

THURSDAY
Bargain Shop Wars
ITV, 8.30pm

New series. Behind the scenes of Britain's newest bargain chain store, fashion retailer Pep&Co, following staff on both the shop floor and at head office as they take on and try to undercut the big names of the discount fashion world and become the cheapest on the high street. The first episode

follows last summer's launch, when £20million was spent in a high-risk rollout of 50 shops across the country. In Corby, shop manager Sue attracts an unexpected visit from a rival, while at head office, a decision is made to ditch the homeware range in favour of a menswear line.

FRIDAY
Henry VIII and His Six Wives
Channel 5, 8pm

New series. A dramatic story in English history, told for the first time from the duelling perspectives of historians Suzannah Lipscomb and Dan Jones. This first episode focuses on Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. For Henry's first love Katherine, this failure to bear a son began an escalating series of events that tested her dignity, her integrity, her faith and her love for her husband. Anne was intelligent, sophisticated and above all ambitious. She and the Henry fell in love and together began to plot Katherine's downfall.

Boomers
BBC1, 9.30pm
Mick returns from his Spanish paradise, minus his young Russian wife. Nigel Planer stars, with Philip Jackson, Alison Steadman, Russ Abbot and Stephanie Beacham.

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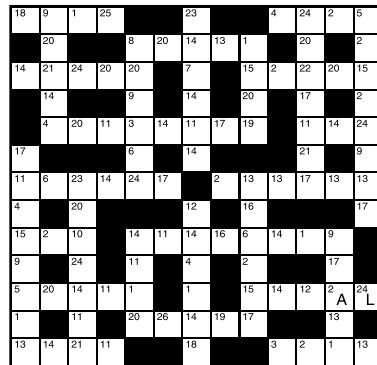
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BRAIN GYM No.372

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
L	N	O	E	M	X	S	B	P	H	F	R	U
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Q	K	I	C	A	Y	T	D	W	V	J	Z	G
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

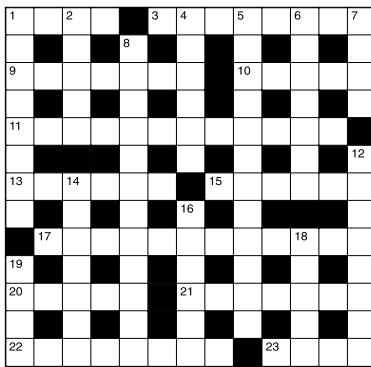
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Takes something the wrong way? (4)
3. Settled in temporary accommodation (8)
9. Driver waiting for a chance to pass? (7)
10. Dash back East to do business (5)
11. Fruit for chaperones? (12)
13. Stones used to make attacks (6)
15. Hurry to finish off the bird (6)
17. Don't the fair-minded have them? (4,8)
20. This tree is hardly a firm favourite! (5)
21. At home and being ruthless (7)
22. Perfect all over? (8)
23. Run back to the right (4)

Down

1. One girl I converted to a system of worship (8)
2. It could be well done (5)
4. Treats as a sister, perhaps? (6)
5. It occurs to one later it's the time one should act (12)
6. Possibly it's ale up at a high level (7)
7. It's not written for one to play (4)
8. Enterprises giving less profits? (12)
12. Part of a comedian's material roasted by the critic? (8)
14. Give some point to something (7)
16. A prosperous thing to do (6)
18. Greek pigeon? (5)
19. A little lower on the farm (4)



Quick Clues:

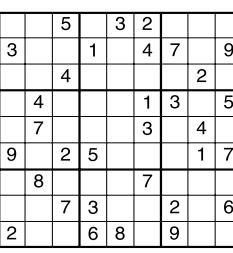
Across

1. Of that kind (4)
3. Amaze (8)
9. Non-professional (7)
10. Droll (5)
11. Agitation (12)
12. Niche (6)
15. Stick together (6)
17. Exaggerated (12)
20. Once more (5)
21. Clash (7)
22. Bony frame-work (8)
19. Go by (4)

Down

1. Flag (8)
2. Stupid (5)
4. Graze (6)
5. Now and then (12)
6. Plunge into liquid (7)
7. Chop (4)
8. Strong protest (12)
12. Incautious (8)
14. Sturgeon roe (7)
16. Plaster for coating walls (6)
18. Sound (5)
19. Go by (4)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >
2 1 5 3 7 6 8 4 9
7 8 9 2 1 4 6 5 3
3 4 6 9 5 8 1 2
6 3 8 7 4 2 5 9 1
5 7 2 8 3 6 4 1 7
1 9 4 5 6 3 2 8 5
9 6 1 8 7 2 3 5
4 5 7 1 2 3 9 8 6
8 2 3 6 9 5 7 1 4

Thinking space



Quiz

1. Into which planet did fragments of comet SL9 crash?
2. How is the aurora borealis also known?
3. Who was the actress mother of former Tory party chairman Jeremy Hanley?
4. The Schick test is used to determine immunity to which disease?
5. Which metal forms rust?
6. What was the Democratic Republic of the Congo formerly known as?
7. What came between the Stone and Iron Ages?
8. Which Spanish golfer, three times Open champion, had his career cut short by arthritis?
9. Which creature did Edgar Allan Poe have say 'Nevermore'?
10. In which city is the hill Arthur's Seat?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Roberto Baggio; 2 Cerebellum; 3 Fox; 4 Zimbabwean; 5 St Lawrence; 6 Jethro; 7 Shelley; 8 Julian; 9 Pierre Proudhon; 10 Giraffe.

Niner

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

9436 gives a metal,
7148 gives a second metal,
3256 gives a third metal.



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Elegant opulence – Grove Lodge in Bath

Enjoy a relaxing weekend in Bath with lots of attractions on tap

A GOOD word from Bill Bryson can make or break a tourist attraction. So imagine the sighs of relief among the powers-that-be at Bath's Roman Baths when the travel writer came to the conclusion that he quite liked them.

In fact Bill didn't just like this example of living, flowing, history, he loved it. So much so that he agreed to record his musings as he went to explore.

The result is one of the most absorbing guided tours you are ever likely to find. Yes, it involves grasping an oversized mobile phone to your ear, but it's worth the time and trouble to listen and, contrary to expectations, makes the experience more intimate and real.

In fact there are three commentaries to

By Mark Drew

choose from, the wry observations of Bill to the expert word of TV historian Alice Roberts and finally a charming simplified version for children.

The Roman Baths, with its steaming waters and fascinating maze of ancient spa rooms, is the obvious place to start. It places Bath's origins within the context of its relatively more recent past. And, as Bryson himself observes, the rooftop view it affords of the baths, cast in the shadow of Bath Abbey and enveloped by the sandstone city, is really something to behold.

Bill would, no doubt, also thoroughly approve of Bath's Grove Lodge, a luxury bed and breakfast an easy 20-minute stroll from the centre of the city and my stay for the weekend. Owners Giovanni and Mary Baiano took it over a couple of years ago

and have transformed it into a laid-back but incredibly stylish resting place.

Appropriately, a Roman bust greets you as you arrive. There are three spacious suites, Georgian, Roman and Chinese. Set in an imposing Georgian town house, guests are treated to their own suite and are delivered a five-star breakfast on a silver tray.

Rugby

Grove Lodge sits opposite Bath Rugby Club's training ground. This is a city where the locals live and breathe rugby. This season has been a disappointment by Bath's standards. But it remains a sport uniting a city that, despite the melting pot of nationalities caused by the influx of tourists, has a feeling of community.

Bath's centre is relatively small, which makes it ideally suited to exploring on foot. There are lots of architectural landmarks

in this city, tucked into a valley around 12 miles from Bristol. The magnificent Royal Crescent is Britain's most famous row of terraces. It sits close to Royal Victoria Park, where families picnic in the summer and that boasts one of the country's best playgrounds.

A five-minute stroll takes you The Circus, another example of Georgian splendour where you can wander as Jane Austen once did. And Bath Abbey is just splendid.

Bath's Achilles heel used to be food. In a city with two universities it lacked culinary breadth. That has changed in recent years and today there are endless places to eat and to match all budgets.

And, if you want to spend the day as Bathonians used to, the Thermae Bath Spa allows you to eat a light lunch in your fluffy white robe before a steam room sweat or a swim in its spectacular rooftop pool.

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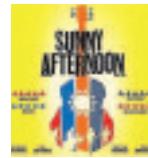
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Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade, plus two nights stay at a four-star London hotel (supplements may apply).

Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

Coach inclusive breaks – Two days

Saturday Night from £149.95

Theatre Weekend with Dinner from £159.95

For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option, see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the evening performance (meal not included).

Both breaks include a standard priced theatre ticket and the option to upgrade plus an overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel.



Impressive detached is in a highly popular area



AN impressive detached home in a highly popular area within a short distance of Sedgley town centre in Gospel End Road, Dudley is for sale through Skitts at £345,000.

The property is extremely well maintained.

With good sized family accommodation and benefits from central heating, double glazing, two reception rooms, a family bathroom plus an en-suite, ample off road parking plus garage and a private and pleasant rear garden.

In more detail the lounge has a coal-effect gas fire and the dining room has a serving hatch to the kitchen which has a cooker hood and ceramic wall tiles and ceiling spot lights. For further information call 01902 686868 or visit www.skitts.net



Traditional semi in desirable location

A LOVELY family home in a desirable location, this much improved traditional semi in High Hade Crescent, Cradley Heath includes a large through lounge/dining room with a log burner and an extended kitchen.

Pleasantly decorated throughout, it is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £190,000.

It features a garage, driveway, gas central heating, double glazing and a long rear garden with a patio area with long lawn, further patio area and shrub borders, a porch, a reception hall, a large lounge/dining room with a bay window and patio doors to the rear, an extended fitted kitchen, three good sized bedrooms and a bathroom with a corner bath with a shower over. Call 0121 5856667 or visit www.hickshadley.com



Wakeman

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73 LONGMEADOW DRIVE, SEDGLEY O/A £279,950

- Well proportioned three bedroom family home
- Enviable position on the popular Northway housing estate
- Extended breakfast kitchen, lounge, sitting room with dining area
- Wide garden plot with wooded area and open fields to the rear
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING E

O/A £279,950



75 NORTHWAY, SEDGLEY

- Well presented link detached house
- Three bedrooms, through lounge & dining room
- Well proportioned accommodation with gas central heating
- Situated on the popular Northway housing estate
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING E

O/A £179,950



ST JAMES STREET
LOWER GORNAL

£189,950

- Five new built detached bungalows with two bedrooms
- Traditionally built to a high standard with two parking spaces per plot
- Fully fitted kitchen with breakfast bar, fully fitted family bathroom
- Spacious living/dining room with french window opening onto landscaped garden
- High levels of insulation and choice of fitted carpets
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-PREDICTED EPC TBC



LAND AT TIVIDALE STREET, DUDLEY PORT O/A £210,000

- Tipton
- Level site with work shop
- Outline planning consent
- Planning App No: DC/14/57543
- Convenient location
- SEDGLEY OFFICE



12 CHEVENING CLOSE, SEDGLEY

£179,950

- Modern detached bungalow
- Two bedrooms, shower room
- Spacious living/dining room with french window opening onto landscaped rear garden
- Enviable position at head of cul de sac
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING D



4 FLAVELLS LANE Offers Over £125,000

- Lower Gornal
- Modern terraced house
- Three bedrooms
- Conservatory
- Off road parking
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC C



155 THE RIDGEWAY, SEDGLEY

- Attractive modern semi detached house
- Well presented three bedroom accommodation
- Gas central heating & upvc double glazing
- Situated in a popular & convenient location
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING E

£149,950



LAND FRONTING FIRS STREET £110,000

- Dudley
- Development Site
- Subject to Local Authority consent
- Rectangular area of land
- Approximately 0.134 acres
- SEDGLEY OFFICE



108 METROPOLITAN LOFTS £100,000

- Dudley
- Duplex apartment
- Mezzanine bedroom
- Secure underground parking
- Close to Dudley town centre
- Parking space, communal grounds
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING C



15 DUNOON DRIVE £49,950

- Wolverhampton
- Modern coach house apartment
- Two bedrooms
- Open plan lounge & kitchen
- Parking space, communal grounds
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING C



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- Semi detached villa residence
- Two bedrooms
- Two reception rooms
- Ground floor bathroom
- SEDGLEY OFFICE-EPC RATING E

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01902 885894

Dudley Office
01384 459999

wakeman-online.com



Extended detached has £345,000 tag

THIS beautifully presented and extended three-bedroomed detached has been finished to exacting standards with a stylish décor and modern kitchen and bathroom fittings.

With views of the church, 9 Round Hill Avenue, Pedmore it is for sale through The Lee, Shaw Partnership at £345,000.

With a single garage and carport and a driveway, it has a luxury bathroom and kitchen, a reception hall and guest WC, a large lounge and a second L-shaped reception room, three bedrooms and a bathroom and gardens.

For further information call 01384 396066 or visit www.leeshaw.com



Charming cottage sited close to the riverside



A CHARMING Grade II listed cottage close to the riverside and in a courtyard setting with a garage, Trow Cottage, 30 Lax Lane, Bewdley has deceptively spacious accommodation.

It is now for sale through Allan Morris at a reduced price of £199,000 with no chain.

It has an attractive front stable door, entrance hall, dual aspect lounge, a dining kitchen with a washing machine, dishwasher, fridge, freezer and fitted electric oven with hob over, stable-type door to the rear patio and courtyard area, first floor bathroom with a white suite, Jack 'n' Jill bathroom, two bedrooms (one having previously been two singles).

Outside the delightful courtyard setting to the rear is a wonderful enclosed haven with mature plants and shrubs and shaped lawns, communal seating area and winding paved pathways.

A paved patio area and lawn are laid against the cottage. For further information contact Allan Morris on 01299 400555 or visit www.allan-morris.co.uk



A beautifully presented and improved residence

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BEAUTIFULLY presented and considerably improved and extended, this modern four-bed detached house lies on the popular Earls Keep housing estate.

With ample off street parking, a substantial double garage and an additional garage/store room and landscaped gardens, the home in Breamore Crescent, Dudley, is for sale through agents Wakeman at £350,000 with no chain.

For further information call Wakeman on 01902 885894 or visit www.wakeman-online.com





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SEDGLEY, Wolverhampton Road

EXTENDED 'Victorian residence' constructed in 1894 to first quality design incorporating many period features with PANORAMIC DISTANT VIEWS comprising; porch, hall, cloakroom, sitting room, 39' dining room, lobby, kitchen, pantry, 4 BEDROOMS (bedroom 1 with shower room en suite), bathroom, cellar. Extensive grounds, ample parking, two car garage, further outbuildings. EPC: E SEDGLEY

New price

WAS £475,000, NOW £425,000



SEDGLEY, Wilton Close (Off Setton Drive)

UNIQUE WITH SELF CONTAINED 'GRANNY-ANNEX'! Highly individual, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached family residence upon corner plot with panoramic distant views. Principal residence comprises; entrance vestibule, 31 ft reception hall, three stairs, cloak, 17 ft lounge, dining room, well equipped kitchen, three bedrooms (one with bathroom en suite), shower room, garage. Granny Annex provides; entrance vestibule, living/dining room, hallway, kitchen, bedroom with shower room en suite, Delightful garden. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £350,000



COSELEY, Seagull Bay Drive

Magnificent, tremendously enhanced, gas centrally heated, & double glazed detached residence in exemplary order throughout upon wider than average plot, comprising; entrance vestibule, hall, lounge, sitting room, dining room leading to CONSERVATORY, kitchen, utility room, cloakroom. Four generous bedrooms (principal en suite), bathroom. LARGE DOUBLE GARAGE/WORKSHOP (22'7" x 13'6"), block paved in/out driveway, garden. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £250,000



WOMBOURNE, Gardeners Way

AN IMPRESSIVE 2 BEDROOM SEMI DETACHED BUNGALOW which enjoys a superb open front outlook with an ESTABLISHED & PRIVATE REAR GARDEN, offering a BEAUTIFULLY PRESENTED and WELL APPOINTED layout with FRONT/SIDE DRIVEWAY. EPC: D

No upward chain

£169,950



SWINDON, Winston Road

Nestled within the heart of sought after Swindon Village, close to friendly village shops and delightful canal side walks, this ATTRACTIVE MID MEWS offers WELL APPOINTED accommodation which includes TWO BEDROOMS. With LONG BLOCK PAVED DRIVEWAY and an enclosed rear garden EPC D

£149,950



LOWER GORNAL, Sandstone Close

Exceptionally well presented residence situated in this well sought after area of Lower Gornal with OPEN ASPECT VIEWS to rear. This family home, ideal for first-time buyers benefits from living room, kitchen-diner, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, central heating, double glazing, rear garden and drive to front. Viewing essential to fully appreciate this fantastic property. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £129,950



UPPER GORNAL, Board School Gardens

ENVIABLY SITUATED IN QUIET 'BACKWATER'! Tremendously improved, gas centrally heated (recent boiler), double glazed semi detached at head of cul-de-sac within walking distance of so many amenities comprising; lounge, kitchen, shower room, two double bedrooms (both with built in wardrobes). Double glazed conservatory, low maintenance gardens, GARAGE with lengthy drive. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £165,000

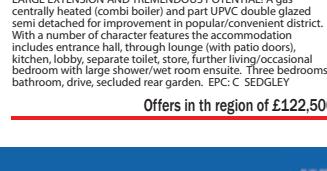


WOODSETTON, Park Close

An attractive, Freehold, gas centrally heated & mostly upVC double glazed semi detached at head of short convenient cul-de-sac briefly comprising; entrance porch, reception hall, lounge with bay, dining room, kitchen. Three bedrooms, tiled bathroom. Parking, and neat/secured rear garden with substantial timber workroom. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

£144,950

New price WAS £144,950, NOW £139,500



SEDGLEY, The Walk

LARGE EXTENSION AND TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL! A gas centrally heated (combi boiler) and part UPVC double glazed semi detached for improvement in popular/convenient district. With a number of character features the accommodation includes entrance hall, through lounge (with patio doors), kitchen, lobby, separate toilet, store, further living/occasional bedroom with large shower/wet room en-suite, three bedrooms, bathroom, drive, secluded rear garden. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £122,500



LOWER GORNAL, Wealdstone Drive

A delightfully presented property situated in the popular area of Lower Gornal, benefiting from; UPVC double glazing, part gas central heating, entrance hall way, guest W/C, living room, kitchen-diner, THREE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, enclosed rear garden, garden to front. Ideal first time buyer property. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £114,950



WOODSETTON, Hilary Crescent

MINING SEARCH AVAILABLE, NO UPWARD CHAIN. Extended semi-detached property is located in the extremely popular Woodsetton area on a generous corner plot. This good-sized family home offers; entrance hallway, living room, dining room, kitchen, ground-floor wet-room, THREE BEDROOMS, family bathroom, double glazing, central heating, enclosed rear garden, ample garden and drive to front. EPC: B. SEDGLEY

WAS £139,950, NOW £114,950



SEDGLEY, Daffodil Close, High Arcal

Significantly improved, gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler) & UPVC DOUBLE GLAZED semi detached overlooking plot to the rear. Rare opportunity to purchase under Housing Association shared ownership initiative whereby 50% SHARE is available. comprising; hallway, store, L shape living room, kitchen. Two double bedrooms, bathroom, garden, block paved front drive. 50% SHARE is available at offers around £70,000. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

New price 0/A £68,000 for 50% Share

New



KINGSWINFORD, Compton Drive

A SUBSTANTIAL & EXTENDED 5 BEDROOM DETACHED FAMILY HOME, with DOUBLE GARAGE, enjoying an open front outlook within a sought after location, offering a GENEROUS and VERY WELL APPOINTED layout with Hall, WC, Large Lounge, Dining Room, Re Fitted Breakfast Kitchen, Utility, 5 Bedrooms, Ensuite and House Bathroom. Set beyond the Front/ Side DRIVEWAY and with a beautifully laid out sunny rear garden. EPC D

£395,000

New



COSELEY, Greensand Drive

EXCEPTIONALLY SPACIOUS - Larger than average, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached within reasonable distance of rail station, & other amenities. Swift completion available, the accommodation includes reception hall, 17ft lounge, dining room, very large CONSERVATORY, kitchen, store, utility room. Four bedrooms (principle bedroom with shower room en suite), bathroom. Garage, gardens. EPC: T.B.A. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £255,000



SEDGLEY, 'Algar Grange', Off Dudley Road

RARE OPPORTUNITY! Exciting development of 11 plots under construction by Woodbourne Group of gas centrally heated & double glazed detached BUNGALOWS/dormer bungalows within walking distance of Sedgley's Bull Ring & all associated amenities. Three designs available with prices from £218,500 up to £264,500, First Phase scheduled for April. SAP: TBA. Further details with Sedgley Office.

PRICES FROM £218,500



LOWER GORNAL, Musk Lane

NO UPWARD CHAIN. An extremely well presented DETACHED property situated in the popular of Lower Gornal. This THREE BEDROOM family home benefits from; spacious entrance hall, attractive kitchen-diner, utility, Living room, dining room, guest W/C, stunning family bathroom, double glazing and gas central heating, garage, driveway which offers ample parking to front and rear garden. EPC: E SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £214,950



LOWER GORNAL, Ash Grove

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Beautifully presented DETACHED bungalow situated in a cul-de-sac location within the popular area of Lower Gornal. This TWO BEDROOM bungalow benefits from entrance hallway, good-sized living room, refitted kitchen-diner, utility, en-suite to master bedroom, family bathroom, central heating and double glazing, detached double garage, enclosed ornamental rear garden. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £210,000



KINGSWINFORD, Grantley Crescent

AN EXTENDED SEMI DETACHED HOUSE with a LARGE REAR GARDEN, superbly placed within Valley Fields, offering a BEAUTIFULLY IMPROVED and ATTRACTIVELY APPOINTED 3 BEDROOM layout. Block Paved Driveway, Garage and the very large and private rear garden. EPC C

£204,950



KINGSWINFORD, Austrey Road

AN EXTENDED & BEAUTIFULLY IMPROVED SEMI-DETACHED HOME within this sought after location, offering an incredibly spacious and attractively appointed layout which is 'READY TO MOVE INTO'; plus a full width driveway and an attractive level garden. EPC C

£187,500



UPPER GORNAL, Pale Street

SPACIOUS, NEW BUILD, gas centrally heated, double glazed dormer style detached with flexible room arrangements. Conveniently situated, the accommodation comprises; hall, stylish BATHROOM, double bedroom, magnificent 'hub of the house' 19 ft living/dining room/kitchen. To first floor is a large 20'7" principal bedroom with shower room en suite. Parking, gardens, distant views. EPC: B. SEDGLEY

New price

WAS £187,500, NOW £185,000



SEDGLEY, Northway

Freehold gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached excellently situated upon favoured development with tremendous distant views. Offering further potential property comprises; enlarged entrance porch, inner hallway, L shape through living/dining room, large CONSERVATORY, kitchen, utility. Three bedrooms, bathroom with white suite, garage, sheltered rear garden, block paved front driveway. EPC Rating C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £170,000

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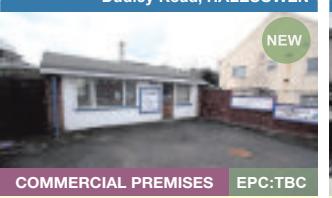
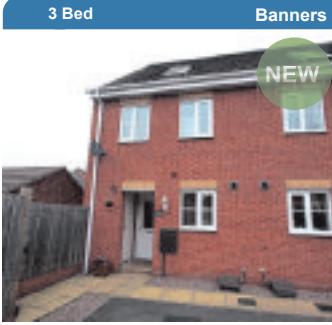
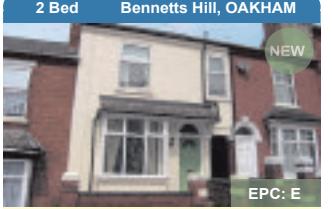
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Netherton and Dudley Sales & Lettings : 01384 456 022

<p>3 Bed Elmhurst Drive, KINGSWINFORD</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This three bedroom end of terrace family home occupies a much larger than average plot which has potential for a large extension or possibly even a separate dwelling (subject to planning consents). Accommodation comprises; entrance hall, kitchen, lounge with dining area, three bedrooms and an attached garage. In addition rear and side gardens there is a DETACHED GARAGE AND PARKING. Located in a popular area near to local amenities and schools, this property requires an early viewing so as to not miss out! NO ONWARD CHAIN.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: TBC Stourbridge Office Offers Around £134,950</p> </div>	<p>3 Bed King Street, LYTHE</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This surprisingly gracious three bedroom, two reception room property would make an ideal home to let or first time purchase. Available with NO ONWARD CHAIN it has accommodation comprising of; lounge, second reception kitchen, bathroom, three first floor bedrooms. The property benefits from double glazing and central heating. This is a convenient location close to shops, restaurants, amenities and public transport links.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: TBC Stourbridge Office Offers Around £99,950</p> </div>	<p>3 Bed Chester Road, NETHERTON</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>Requiring some TLC and modernisation but realistically priced to reflect its current condition this three bedroom end terrace offers LOADS OF POTENTIAL! The accommodation comprises of; entrance hall, guest WC, lounge with dining area, breakfast kitchen, first floor landing, three bedrooms and house bathroom. Externally there is a garden to the front which offers potential for off road parking and a large rear garden. NO ONWARD CHAIN. The property is located in a popular estate close to transport links, amenities and local schools.</p> </div> <div> <p>ATTENTION INVESTORS! EPC: TBC Netherton Office Offers Around £99,950</p> </div>		
<p>3 Bed Park Road, QUARRY BANK</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This beautifully refurbished and redecorated three bedroom family home is finished to a high standard with brand new flooring throughout and brand new kitchen and bathroom. The accommodation briefly comprises; porch, entrance hall, large open plan dining room and kitchen with French doors leading to the garden, first floor landing, three great sized bedrooms and family bathroom. There is a driveway to the front and to the rear is a great size garden with brick built out house. Available with NO ONWARD CHAIN.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: F Stourbridge Office £134,950</p> </div>	<p>2 Bed Meeting Street, NETHERTON</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>INCLUDES PLOT TO SIDE! We are also offering for sale a commercial property on Griffin Street which partially adjoins the plot. The side garden currently has a covenant which restricts it to be used as a garden only, but the current owner informs us they have been informed it can be removed easily. The property has undergone full refurbishment in recent years with some replastering, damp proofing and even a replacement flat roof. Accommodation comprises; lounge, dining room, designer modern Paula Rosa fitted kitchen, bathroom with roll top slip bath, two great size bedrooms.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: E Netherton Office Offers Around £119,950</p> </div>	<p>Dudley Road, HALESOWEN</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>A unique opportunity to acquire a freehold commercial property in this busy roadside location. Currently with B1 use classification, has previously been D1 and our client informs us that A3 would be permitted also. Also redevelopment potential subject to relevant planning consent. The property has a generously sized car parking area to the front and comprises of a single storey building with a reception area, private office, general office, kitchen area and toilet. Viewing strictly by appointment only.</p> </div> <div> <p>COMMERCIAL PREMISES EPC: TBC Netherton Office Offers Around £80,000</p> </div>	<p>2 Bed Dudley Wood Road, DUDLEY WOOD</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This spacious two bedroom semi detached home has well presented accommodation comprising of two reception rooms, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. There is a driveway to the front, which extends beyond a garage down the side of the property and to the private rear garden. This home is located in the ever popular Dudley Wood area, which is close to local amenities and schools and is not far from public transport links including Dudley Heath Train Station. Viewing highly recommended.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: E Netherton Office Offers Around £109,950</p> </div>	
<p>3 Bed Banners Lane, HALESOWEN</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This well decorated and nicely presented three bedroom home is worthy of an early viewing in order to avoid disappointment. The property is situated in a quiet semi-detached position and is a short distance from a primary school and there is a large garage to the rear with electricity accessed via a service road. Internally there is accommodation to comprise of an bright and airy, welcoming entrance hallway, lounge with feature log burner effect electric fire, modern fitted kitchen with integral appliances to include electric oven and grill, electric hob and dishwasher, large conservatory with curtains, house plumbing for washing machine. Upstairs there is a fitted shower room and three well sized bedrooms, all with built-in wardrobes. As you would expect from a modern home, there is double glazing and gas centrally heating throughout.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: B Netherton Office Offers Around £149,950</p> </div>	<p>Griffin Street, NETHERTON</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>COMMERCIAL PREMISES EPC: TBC Netherton Office Offers Around £100,000</p> </div>	<p>2 Bed Church Street, CRADLEY HEATH</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>Wow! This is a UNIQUE, STUNNING AND STYLISHLY converted apartment! This property has its own entrance and accommodation spans across two floors, with some great features like glass brick wall and a large staircase. The accommodation comprises of; entrance hall, lounge, fitted kitchen, bathroom, two well proportioned bedrooms. A viewing is a must to appreciate this unique property.</p> </div> <div> <p>1 BED FLAT ALSO AVAILABLE AT £72,500 EPC: D Netherton Office Offers Around £89,950</p> </div>		
<p>3 Bed Trysull Way, NETHERTON</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>ANIMACULATEDLY presented family home on this ever popular estate close to schools and town centre. The property is situated in a quiet semi-detached position and is a short distance from a primary school and there is a large garage to the rear with electricity accessed via a service road. Internally there is accommodation to comprise of an bright and airy, welcoming entrance hallway, lounge with feature log burner effect electric fire, modern fitted kitchen with integral appliances to include electric oven and grill, electric hob and dishwasher, large conservatory with curtains, house plumbing for washing machine. Upstairs there is a fitted shower room and three well sized bedrooms, all with built-in wardrobes. As you would expect from a modern home, there is double glazing and gas centrally heating throughout.</p> </div> <div> <p>UNEXPECTEDLY BACK ON MARKET!! EPC: E Netherton Office £159,950</p> </div>	<p>2 Bed Bennetts Hill, OAKHAM</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This well presented two bedroom terraced home has spacious accommodation comprising of; entrance hall, two reception rooms, modern fitted kitchen, two well proportioned bedrooms and re-fitted bathroom. There is a good size private rear garden. Convenient and sought after. Only a short distance close to local amenities and the local road network. Available with no NO ONWARD CHAIN.</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: E Netherton Office Offers Around £119,950</p> </div>	<p>3 Bed Church Road, NETHERTON</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This unique and deceptively spacious large three bedroom house is located in a most convenient location and has accommodation comprising of; entrance porch, hallway, guest w.c., lounge with dining area, large kitchen, sitting room, first floor landing, three double bedrooms and house bathroom. The property also benefits from a detached double garage and a large driveway to the front. Early viewing is highly recommended to fully appreciate.</p> </div> <div> <p>UNEXPECTEDLY BACK ON MARKET!! EPC: D Netherton Office Offers Around £139,950</p> </div>		
<p>2 Bed Spicer Lodge, STOURBRIDGE</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW PRICE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>£25,000 REDUCTION! RETIREMENT DEVELOPMENT EPC: D Stourbridge Office Offers Around £125,000</p> </div>	<p>3 Bed Walker Avenue, QUARRY BANK</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW PRICE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>BACK ON MARKET! EPC: E Stourbridge Office Offers Around £125,000</p> </div>	<p>2 Bed Hingley Court, CRADLEY HEATH</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW PRICE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>SHARED OWNERSHIP EPC: B Netherton Office Offers Around £47,000</p> </div>	<p>3 Bed Lewis Road, LYTHE</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW PRICE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>A surprisingly spacious three bedroom home with two reception rooms. Being situated in this popular and convenient location for shops, amenities, restaurants and public transport links it is in a prime position. The property is a three storey semi-detached house with a large rear garden. The ground floor accommodation comprises of; entrance hall, sitting room, kitchen with dining area, first floor landing, three bedrooms, bathroom. The property has ample off road parking to the front and an attractive rear garden. NO UPWARD CHAIN!</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: D Stourbridge Office Offers Around £125,000</p> </div>	<p>1 Bed Dadford View, BRIERLEY HILL</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>NEW PRICE</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <div> <p>This well presented one bedroom ground floor flat in this popular and convenient development is worthy of an early viewing to avoid disappointment. Benefits double glazing, with accommodation briefly comprising of; entrance porch, hallway, lounge with dining area, kitchen, bathroom, one double bedroom. The property is located in a prime position, close to local amenities and the M6 motorway. The property is available with no upward chain and suitable for first time buyers or investors, with an expected annual income of £42,500. Call the Stourbridge office to book a viewing now!</p> </div> <div> <p>EPC: E Stourbridge Office Offers Around £59,950</p> </div>



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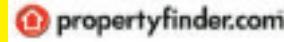
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**Oakham, Dudley
Dingle Close**

A splendid, extended semi-detached family home in this popular location, a cul-de-sac just off the Oakham Road with parking for at least three car. With downstairs WC and further doors to: open plan lounge/dining room to the front - a through room with doors to the rear garden; utility area leading through to the modern fitted kitchen with breakfast bar and with a family room off, five good sized bedrooms. Freehold, viewing is highly recommended, EPC D £274,995

**NETHERTON
William Street**

A lovely two bed mid terraced house with walking distance of Dudley Hill Town centre and the Merry Hill Centre. With double glazing and central heating, the property has two good sized reception rooms with a modern fitted kitchen to the rear and a shower/WC on the ground floor, upstairs there are two spacious double bedrooms. Outside there is a patio area leading to a lawned area (with path centrally leading to a further paved area, with side access through a shared driveway to the front). No upward chain, viewing recommended EPC TBC £92,500

**TIPTON
Gordon Drive**

A two bedroom semi-detached property in a cul-de-sac location, with double glazing and central heating. Having an entrance hall leading to a good sized lounge with stairs off to the first floor and a door to the kitchen/diner. Through the kitchen to the rear there is access to the rear garden and patio. Upstairs there is a landing with doors to the front and rear bedrooms and the house bathroom/WC with a shower over the bath. No upward chain, viewing recommended EPC C £104,995

**NETHERTON
Mousehall Farm**

A three bedroom terraced property located in a cul-de-sac. Double glazed and central heating. Entrance leading to a spacious lounge leading to an open plan kitchen with dining area. Stairs leading to the first floor landing, three good sized bedrooms leading from the landing and the Family bathroom. Bedroom one and two having built in wardrobes. Bathrom with WC and shower over the bath. Rear garden has a patio area and garden area.

**DUDLEY
Wrens Nest Road**

A modern, mid terraced three bed townhouse (three stores) with no road gated parking to the rear. Having double glazing and central heating, the ground floor has a fitted kitchen, WC and lounge to the rear with access to the rear garden, the first floor has a double bedroom to the rear and a single to the front, along with a bathroom/WC, and the second floor has the master bedroom with dressing leading to an en-suite shower/WC. There is a small garden to the rear. Unfurnished, no pets, no smokers. Available now for long term. EPC C £124,995

**NETHERTON
Park Road**

A mid terraced, two bed house with double glazing and central heating, comprising lounge to the front, archway through to an open plan dining/kitchen with stairs off to the first floor and a door to the bathroom/WC with shower over the bath, there is also access to the rear garden/yard. On the first floor, there are two double bedrooms, with an en-suite WC of the master bedroom to the rear. Freehold. Must Be Viewed.

**TIPTON
Jubilee Road**

•• MUST BE VIEWED •• A fantastic EXTENDED four bedroom spacious family home. Having the benefit of energy saving RADIANT PANELS, giving exceptionally low cost energy bills (average bills are £55 per mth for gas and electricity). With guest WC, lounge, dining room, modern fitted kitchen with access to a spacious conservatory to rear. MULTIFUSE room/garage workshop, on the first floor there is master bedroom with walk in wardrobe and EN-SUITE bathroom/WC with shower over the bath and further dressing room, three further good sized bedrooms.

**SELDLEY
Gospel End Street**

An OUTSTANDING and delightful mid terraced style cottage which offers original character features. Having two bedrooms and walking distance to Sledley Village. Being tastefully decorated and presented to a high standard. EPC-D £149,950

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agent to set on your
behalf then please
check your
agreement to make
sure you are not liable
for any fees through them
If you are not sure
about your property**

**Stourbridge
Castle Grove**

A three bedroom semi detached property in a popular location. Having two reception rooms, central heating and double glazing. Modern fitted kitchen. House bathroom. Garage and off street parking. Gardens to front and rear. Available to view now. No DSS. EPC C £850 PCM & Fees

**Tipton
Waterloo Street East**

A three bedroom link detached house. Fitted kitchen with dining area. Brand new shower room and separate WC. Central heating. Driveway and single garage. Unfurnished, available to view now. No DSS, no pets. EPC C £650 PCM & Fees

**Dudley
Dingle Close**

A three bedroom semi-detached house with garage and driveway. Two reception rooms both with feature fireplace. Fitted kitchen with built in oven. Three good sized bedrooms. No DSS. Available from mid April 2016. EPC D £625 PCM & Fees

**TIPTON
Wynn Griffiths Drive**

A modern two bedroom semi detached house. With lounge, fitted kitchen with oven and hob, bathroom with shower. Central heating & double glazing. Garden to the rear. Driveway. No DSS, no pets. EPC C £545 PCM & Fees

**Dudley
Himley Road**

A one bedroom mid terrace house. Fully refurbished. Open plan lounge and fitted kitchen with built in appliances. Economical electric storage heating. Lovely views to the rear. Garage and off road parking. No DSS, no pets. EPC F £525 PCM & Fees

**W'hampton
Morton Avenue**

A three bedroom semi detached family home with double glazing and central heating. Good size lounge, kitchen with dining area. Three good size bedrooms, two bathrooms and separate w/c. Unfurnished, available for long term rental. No DSS, no pets. EPC D £525 PCM & Fees

**Bilston
Oaklands Court**

Modern 2 bedroom ground floor apartment. Fully modern integrated kitchen, Master bedroom with ensuite/shower room. Secure parking available, Secure Communal Entrance, Unfurnished, available now to view. EPC D £495 PCM & Fees

**NETHERTON
St Johns Road**

A modern, two bed second floor apartment with lounge, fitted kitchen, two good-sized bedrooms and bathroom with shower over the bath. Unfurnished, no pets. No DSS. EPC on order. Available now. £460 PCM & Fees

**DUDLEY
Windmill End**

Recently decorated two bedroom 1st floor flat. Open plan lounge & kitchen includes fitted oven & hob. Bathroom with mixer shower. One double bedroom and further single. Unfurnished. No Dss. No pets. EPC C £450 PCM & Fees

**DUDLEY
Ednam Road**

A newly converted apartment in the centre of Dudley town. Lounge and modern fitted kitchen. Bathroom with shower over bath. Central heating and double glazing. Viewing recommended. EPC C £430 PCM & Fees

**Dudley
Norman Street**

Fully furnished two bedroom terrace house. New fitted kitchen with cooker and further utility area with appliances. New bathroom with shower on the same lower ground floor. Two reception rooms. Garden/ court yard to rear. No Dss or pets. EPC D £500 PCM & Fees

**DUDLEY
New Rowley Road**

A one bed first floor flat (with separate entrance) - new double glazing, having central heating. Good sized lounge, separate kitchen and double bedroom, bathroom/WC off the bedroom. No pets, DSS considered with guarantor and good references. Available to view now. EPC E £385 PCM & Fees

**OLDBURY
Alexandra Way**

One bedroom first floor flat. Open plan lounge and kitchen. Bedroom with built in wardrobes. Bathroom. Unfurnished. DSS considered with guarantor. Available to view now. EPC F £375 PCM & Fees

Stacks up nicely on paper and on road

By Ian Donaldson

IF you look at the figures that estate cars boast about it's not hard to spot who takes top spot in the sales charts.

Among smaller estates (that's a relative term these days) the Skoda Octavia rules the roost, topping the Ford Focus and Vauxhall Astra. And with their rear seats fold flat, that's the same order they make when load space is measured.

If style matters, then practicality matters more when you're a family and all their stuff to move around, it seems.

Still, you'd never call the latest Astra estate – or Sports Tourer in Vauxhall speak – a noticeably small car. It measures only a little more on the outside than before but that brings more headroom for front seat passengers, extra legroom in the rear and a usefully bigger boot.

Clever design (a lighter car needs smaller brakes and wheels, for instance) brings benefit in economy and emissions, helped too by this Sports Tourer being the most streamlined estate ever from the griffin brand.

This latest Astra Sports Tourer (built, like the hatch at Ellesmere Port in Cheshire) has a range of engines that mix better economy (and less weight) and emissions than before, with the 110 horsepower diesel achieving 83mpg in official tests and a modest 89g/km from the tailpipe into the bargain.

Higher up the food chain we reach Vauxhall's newish Bi-Turbo diesels, all with 1.6 litres and up to 160 horsepower, enough for 137mph top speed and acceleration near identical to the bigger 2.0 litre engine it displaces.

Confidence

So, the new Sports Tourer is bigger inside and more economical than before. That ought to give Vauxhall confidence as it sets out to topple the upstart Skoda in the sales chart.

But perhaps the biggest weapon of all is a range that costs less than before; in one case (the posh Elite) there's a £1,870 saving.

Of course, list prices at the part of the market where Vauxhall operates are only a starting point as fleet manager start their negotiations, but they can now begin from a lower base.

Prices start at £16,585 with the SRI and SRI Nav versions (£19,885 to £24,090) the likely most popular, taking 40 per cent of sales. There's good news on insurance too, with all the newcomers occupying a lower and cheaper slot.

Range highlights, says Vauxhall, include the 1.0-litre three-cylinder Turbo Start/Stop ecoFLEX model priced from £17,285.

With a five-speed automatic transmission, the same model achieves 97g/km CO2 emissions. That means no road tax – and a smug expression on the driver's face, no doubt.

The range-topping 200 horsepower petrol 1.6-litre is available in SRI trim priced from £21,725. Diesels includes the 1.6-litre Whisper Diesel with 105 horsepower (prices start at £18,785) that achieves 83.1mpg and CO2 emissions of 89g/km.

On some versions of the new Sports Tourer there is the option of adding OnStar which includes a live link to someone sitting in Luton who will assist with everything, from help after an accident to asking if you're OK should the car tell them an airbag has gone off, something it does automatically.

If the car seems to stack up nicely on paper (where, you suspect many decisions over choice will be made for this workhorse), there remains the question of how the car drives.

Well, it looks the business inside. Pretty businesslike too, with lots of black surfaces and a clean look to the dashboard, where the current trend (craze?) to eliminate buttons in favour of a big touchscreen has been restrained enough to keep things conveniently manageable.

No complaints either about the twin-turbo diesel, which was quiet at work and pulled strongly, helped along by a pleasantly precise gearchange.

A dash readout of 59mpg at journey's end will please both driver and fleet manager too.

TESTED

Vauxhall Astra Sports Tourer SRI

Nav 1.6CDTi

Engine: Diesel engine, 158bhp

Warranty: Three years, 60,000 miles

Economy: The Astra Sports Tourer can do 67.3mpg

Insurance: 18

Price: £23,385



DUDLEY MOTOR COMPANY DUDLEY MOTOR COMPANY

CARS OF THE WEEK * CARS OF THE WEEK * CARS OF THE WEEK



2008/08 MINI COOPER
3 door, Grey, 63,000 miles
£5,995



2012/12 VAUXHALL AMPERA 0.0
ELECTRON AUTO ELECTRIC HYBRID
5 door, Grey, 38,000 miles
£14,995



2011/11 VAUXHALL CORSA
1.3 CDTI 16V ECOFLEX VAN
Red, 53,279 miles
£4,695

Vauxhall Adam Selection

2013/13 VAUXHALL ADAM JAM 1.2 Yellow 30,000 miles £6995

2014/14 VAUXHALL ADAM GLAM 1.2 Black, 9800 miles £9495

2013/63 VAUXHALL ADAM SLAM 1.4 Red only 4,000 miles £9495

Vauxhall Agila Selection

2011/11 VAUXHALL AGILA 1.2 SE AUTO 5 door, Blue, 23,190 miles £5750

2013/63 VAUXHALL AGILA 1.2 SE 5 door, Silver, 3,000 miles £6995

Vauxhall Ampera Selection

2012/12 VAUXHALL AMPERA ELECTRON HYBRID White, 25,000 miles £14995

2012/12 VAUXHALL AMPERA 0.0 ELECTRON AUTO ELECTRIC HYBRID 5 door, Grey, 38,000 miles £14995

Vauxhall Antara Selection

2009/09 VAUXHALL ANTARA SE CDTI AUTO Blue, 60,000 miles £8495

2012/61 VAUXHALL ANTARA 2.4i 16V 16TP EXCLUSIV 5 door, Black, 38,697 miles Was £9350 Now £8495

Vauxhall Astra Selection

2006/06 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.4 ACTIVE Silver, Only 17,000 miles £3650

2007/07 VAUXHALL ASTRA SXI SPORT HATCH 1.6 3 door, Grey, 47,000 miles £3995

2007/07 VAUXHALL ASTRA TWIN TOP DESIGN 48,000 miles, Red £4995

2009/08 VAUXHALL ASTRA + TOP DESIGN Black, 32,000 miles £5150

2008/58 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6 DESIGN 3 door, Gold Sat Nav, 30,000 miles £5250

2010/60 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6 SRI 5 door, Grey, 54,000 miles £6495

2011/11 VAUXHALL ASTRA TOURER EST CDTI 47,000 miles £6995

2012/12 VAUXHALL ASTRA EXCLUSIVE 1.4 5 door, Technica, 32,261 miles £7495

2012/12 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6 ACTIVE 5 door, Black, 45,000 miles £7495

2012/12 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.6 SRI ESTATE, Silver, 28,000 miles £8250

2012/62 VAUXHALL ASTRA LTD EDITION Red, 28,000 miles, 5 door £8750

2012/62 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.7 CDTI LTD EDITION White-Black, only 10,000 miles £9495

2013/13 VAUXHALL ASTRA 2.0 TOURER SRI CDTI 5 door, Blue, 34,000 miles £9495

2012/12 VAUXHALL ASTRA TOURER SE 2.0 CDTI 5 door, 24,000 miles £9995

2015/15 VAUXHALL ASTRA DESIGN 1.4 5 door, White, 13,000 miles £9995

2014/64 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.3 DESIGN CDTI ECOFLEX 5 door, Silver, 7,316 miles Now £9495

2013/63 VAUXHALL ASTRA GTC 2.0 CDTI AUTOMATIC, White 34,000 miles £10495

2014/14 VAUXHALL ASTRA 1.4 ENERGY, 5 door, Silver, 5424 miles £10495

2011/60 VAUXHALL ASTRA 2.0 VXR ARCTIC EDITION, 3 door, White, 40,000 miles £10995

2014/64 VAUXHALL ASTRA GTC SPORT 2.0 CDTI S/S White, 8,759 miles £11995

Vauxhall Corsa Selection

2006/56 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 DESIGN 5 door, only 26,000 miles £2995

2005/55 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4i 16V DESIGN AUTO, 5 door, Silver, 49,473 miles £3850

2010/59 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SE 5 door, Blue, 28,000 miles £5995

2012/12 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 SE 5 door, Silver, 20,000 miles £6495

2012/62 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 SXI 5 door, 9,000 miles, Silver £6495

2012/62 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SXI Black, 20,000 miles £7195

2013/13 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SXI SAT NAV, 3 door, White, 14,400 miles £7650

2013/13 VAUXHALL CORSA SE 1.4, 5 door, Waterworld £7995

2012/63 VAUXHALL CORSA SRI 1.4 5 door, Black, 17,000 miles £7995

2014/64 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SE 5 door, Grey, 10,000 miles £8495

2014/14 VAUXHALL CORSA LTD EDITION 3 door, Chilli Orange, 11,000 miles £8495

2010/10 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.6 VXR 3 door, Blue, 26,908 miles £8995

2015/64 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.2 SE 5 door, Grey, 16,000 miles £8995

2012/12 VAUXHALL CORSA 1.6 VXR, 3 door, Red, 35,664 miles £9995

2015/15 VAUXHALL CORSA SE ECOFLEX 5 door, Silver, 6,200 miles £10495

Vauxhall Cascada Selection

2013/13 VAUXHALL CASCADA 2.0 SE CDTI S/S, Black, 24,271 miles £13995

Vauxhall Mokka Selection

2013/13 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV 43,000 miles, Silver Was £7450 Now £7150

2012/61 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA EXCLUSIV 2.0 CDTI 5 door, Silver, only 18,000 miles Was £8995 Now £8495

2012/62 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA CDTI NAV ECOFLEX 36,000 miles, Grey Was £9495 Now £8995

2012/62 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA SPORT TOURER 2.0 CDTI Grey, 38,000 miles, £9495

2013/13 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 2.0 ELITE NAV CDTI 5 door, Silver, 32,295 miles, £11495

2015/15 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 1.8 VVT 140 SRI Hatchback, White, 9,583 miles Was £12495 Now £11995

2013/13 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA 2.0 SRI NAV CDTI, Carbon F, 41,200 miles £12150

2015/65 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA SRI 1.6 CDTI VXR LINE 5 door, White, Sat Nav etc. £16995 Now £17495

2015/65 VAUXHALL INSIGNIA SRI VX LINE SPORT TOURER White, Sat Nav £17495

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T 4X4 EXCLUSIV Blue, 9,800 miles £16995

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T 4X4 Blue, 9,800 miles £16995

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV Orange Rocks, 16,600 miles £13495

2014/14 VAUXHALL MOKKA EXCLUSIV 1.7 CDTI White, only 6,000 miles £13495

2015/64 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV Orange Rock, 21,000 miles £13995

2014/14 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.7 CDTI SE White, 18,000 miles £13995

2014/14 VAUXHALL MOKKA HAT 1.7 CDTI 130 TACH LIN, 5 door, White, 20,000 miles £13995

2015/65 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.7 CDTI TECHLINE Blue, 2,800 miles, SOLD

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T 4X4 EXCLUSIV Blue, 9,800 miles £16995

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T 4X4 Blue, 9,800 miles £16995

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV Orange Rocks, 16,600 miles £13495

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV Orange Rock, 21,000 miles £13995

2015/15 VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.4 T EXCLUSIV Orange Rock, 21,000 miles £13995

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2015/15 VAUXHALL MOK



A4 Avant is bigger, lighter and quieter

By John Griffiths

Don't be deceived by appearances – there is a new Audi on the road, even if it takes an experienced eye to tell the 2016 A4 Avant from its predecessor.

In fact, this latest estate version of the popular compact executive car is all new – new platform, new powertrains, and new technology.

It's bigger, a lot lighter and quieter – three areas in which it goes to the top of its class – as well as being up to 21 per cent more fuel efficient.

So why, when you have what is essentially an all-new car, hasn't Audi done more with the external styling? Well several reasons spring to mind, not least the incredibly strong brand image the company has with buyers – one look and you (and everyone else) knows what it is and what it means.

There have been some tweaks, not least of which is improved aerodynamics: yes it looks particularly sporty by estate standards but the real reason behind that shape is to reduce drag and therefore fuel consumption. That's particularly true of the test car, a 2.0 litre turbo diesel Ultra Sport with 148bhp, the most economical of the new Avant family. It sits lower on its standard sports suspension as a further means of reducing drag, plus it's fitted with low rolling resistance tyres. It's also one of the more affordable Avant models at £30,815, in a range which runs from £27,300 to £40,350.

One of Audi's headline selling points for the new A4 Avant is its class-leading position in the space race, against the opposition. It has 505 litres of cargo space with five people on board, rising to a whopping 1,510 litres if the rear seats are folded down. Since estates are all about practicality, an electrically operated tailgate and retractable load cover are standard. There's also significantly more head and shoulder room for those in the front, while three adults shouldn't be much of a squeeze in the back.

As well as a new platform, the Avant has a range of re-worked engines and transmissions, including a six-speed manual and two auto options, designed to increase efficiency. The 148bhp test car's official figure (according to lab tests) is 70.6mpg which equates to a low CO₂ rating of 104g/km and a benefit in kind liability of 18 per cent – both impressive figures for the business user aiming to keep their tax liability down. My 'real world' test produced a still very acceptable figure of 55mpg.

As the lowest powered version of the new Avant, the test car's acceleration of 0 to 62mph in 9.2 seconds is still far from sluggish. It pulls strongly from low revs, but, with a car designed for economy, the cruising ratios are relatively high and you need to change down for quick A-road overtaking.

The second dividend is that, combined with the sports suspension standard on Ultra models, the Avant's handling is sharper, with a quicker 'turn in' with dynamics which wouldn't disgrace a sports saloon.

Warning

Another fuel-saving and comfort aid is the optional 'predictive efficiency' computer system, which uses satnav data to warn you in advance of, for example, bends and traffic signs which might not yet be visible. You can then slow gently, avoiding hard last minute braking and acceleration which have a cost in fuel (and ride comfort for passengers).

The test car was fitted with Audi's proven 'Drive Select' system which allows you to configure the throttle response and weighting of the steering to half a dozen settings, including dynamic, comfort and efficiency. I found that, for the majority of the time, the 'auto' setting was just right although improved damping in the 'comfort' setting did actually improve ride quality on some of our bumpier b-roads.

The test car was fitted with the optional (for £1,510) leather and alcantara upholstery, which is hard-wearing and further improved the ambience of the already light and airy interior.

The dash and centre console exude quality, and are clear and uncluttered despite the plethora of modern systems packed into this particular A4.

Many secondary functions (media, radio, Drive Select and so on) are control by a couple of chunky switches and a rotary 'mouse' which falls easy to hand in conjunction with the large central display screen. There are also repeat controls on the steering wheel.

The adaptive cruise control on the steering column can be operated with one finger and is far more practical in today's traffic conditions than an older 'cruise only' system. It keeps you a safe distance from vehicles in front, braking and accelerating to your set speed as necessary and when conditions allow. I found it a useful, and relaxing, driver aid particularly on motorways.

The central screen is also Audi's latest multi-media interface, first seen on the upmarket A6 and A8 models, running the audio and connectivity systems. The driver and front passenger and individual air conditioning controls, and even those in the rear can set their own climate.

There is a full range of safety systems, which combined with the new A4's basic construction and materials earned it a maximum EuroNCAP safety rating.

With its class-leading load space, the new A4 Avant passes the practicality test for a modern estate car without sacrificing any of its elegant, even sporting style. It's also lighter, more aerodynamic and more efficient than ever, as well as offering some of the most advanced technology available to today's motorist.

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New Verso MPV puts safety first

Toyota's flexible, family-friendly Verso MPV has been given a substantial safety upgrade with a package of Toyota Safety Sense and driver assistance features being added to the standard specification of every model.

It's part of a refresh for 2016 that includes a revised grade structure, new alloy wheel designs and a clutch of detail changes in the cabin. Prices start at £18,120.

Verso's Toyota Safety Sense benefits include a pre-collision system that recognises an imminent impact with a vehicle ahead, triggering a warning to the driver and priming the brakes for extra stopping power the moment the brake pedal is pressed.

If the driver fails to respond, autonomous emergency braking is activated, automatically slowing the vehicle to reduce the force of any impact.

Verso further gains an automatic high beam feature, which maintains excellent forward visibility when driving at night. It detects both the headlights of oncoming vehicles and the tail lights of vehicles ahead of you, automatically switching between high and low beams to avoid dazzling other drivers.

Alert

The third Toyota Safety Sense element for Verso is lane departure alert. This monitors lane markings on the road and helps prevent accidents and head-on collisions caused by a vehicle drifting out of its lane.

If the vehicle starts to deviate from its lane without the turn indicators being used, the system alerts the driver with visual and audible warnings.

These features are in addition to Verso's proven active and passive safety provisions, from its strong body construction, designed to absorb and channel impact forces away from the cabin, to the seven airbags, ABS, emergency brakeforce distribution, brake assist, traction control and vehicle stability control that all come as standard.

Verso is available in a new Design trim, alongside the established Active, Icon and Excel specifications.

Available with the 1.8-litre Valvematic petrol engine with automatic transmission and the 1.6-litre D-4D diesel, it comes with the Toyota Touch 2 with Go multimedia system with satellite navigation and reversing camera, rear privacy glass and a (fixed) panoramic roof. These are in addition to the standard features of Icon grade, including DAB tuner, dusk-sensing headlights, cruise control, automatic air conditioning, six-speaker audio and power windows front and rear.

Panoramic

At the top of the range, Excel models gain the panoramic roof, rain-sensing wipers, auto-dimming rear-view mirror, high-intensity discharge headlights and combination leather and cloth upholstery.

Icon, Design and Excel versions of Verso can be specified with an optional, high-value family pack that provides two rear seatback screens with integrated DVD players and leather seat upholstery (on the first and second row seats) for £1,995. Other entertainment system combinations are available as stand-alone options, including permutations of master and slave DVD screens and single or double iPad docks.

New alloy wheel designs feature on the 2016 Verso – 16-inch for Icon, 17-inch for Design and 17-inch with a double-spoke arrangement for Excel, with an anthracite dark grey finish. The colour choices include a new platinum bronze shade.

In the cabin there is a new leather-trimmed steering wheel with integrated switches for hands-free phone use and other functions, a new gear shift design and a new-look cloth upholstery for Icon and Design models.

To free up more boot space, the tyre repair kit (when specified) has been relocated to the underfloor storage compartment behind the driver's seat.

The Toyota Touch 2 system adopts a larger, seven-inch display and, where satnav is specified, an improved interface for easier, more intuitive operation.



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lost & found

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LOST

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1

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SPORTING FEATURE

By Joe Edwards

"I train for 52 hours every week, working a lot on my concentration and almost go into a meditative state"

STOURBRIDGE shooter Richard Davies is fully focused on regaining world No.1 status and securing a place in the Great Britain team for the Rio Paralympic games.

The 44-year-old is having a fine year so far and became the British disabled shooting champion, after scoring a record 632.6 at the British Airgun Championships in Surrey.

At the end of January, he won bronze at the IPC Shooting World Cup in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, where more than 300 disabled shooters from 30 different countries took part.

Impress

Davies, who made his Paralympic debut at London 2012, is now looking impress Team GB selectors and once again make it to the top of the world rankings.

"I have just regained my British title and I'm off to Poland for a World Championship competition in April, and hopefully I can move up the rankings after that," he said.

"Then I have got another tournament in Hanover, Germany, which is the final one before the team selection for Rio."

Davies was a wheelchair rugby player for 14 years but gave up the sport after failing to make the squad for the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

He then dedicated himself to training to become a shooter, and made his international bow at the IPC Shooting World Cup in Antalya, Turkey one year later. In 2011, he reached No.1 in the world rank-

ings and then fulfilled his dream of competing in the Paralympics in 2012.

He placed 16th in the R4 10-metre air rifle standing mixed SH2 event and admitted the pressure of being in front of a huge home crowd got to him.

"London was unbelievable, our normal spectator crowds are of around 200 people but in London there was about 2,500 people and I really felt the home pressure," he said.

"I really felt it that day, it affected my psyche. The home pressure got to me, and I didn't perform as well as I should have."

"I have never felt anything like it, but I have been around the world for a few years since and I feel like I'm ready for Rio. The nerves have been put to one side."

At the IPC Shooting World Cup back in January, Richard had to maintain total concentration in temperatures of more than 30 degrees and said shooting almost requires going into a 'meditative state'. Hav-

ing good stability and keeping your heart rate calm is paramount in shooting," he said. "I train for 52 hours every week, working a lot on my concentration and almost go into a meditative state."

The SH2 classification is for competitors who are not able to support the weight of the firearm with their arms and therefore require a spring mounted stand to shoot.

The target consists of 10 concentric scoring rings, with the central ring worth 10 points and the outside ring worth one.

Decimal

In the 10m air rifle event, the whole target is 4.5 centimetres in diameter and the central ring is just half a millimetre across.

Each competitor takes 60 shots at the target in a set time period, and then the eight top scoring athletes go through to a 10-shot final.

The shots in the final are scored to one decimal place, with a top score of 10.9, and are added on to the qualification score to determine the winner.

Davies is currently fourth in the IPC official world rankings for the R4 10-metre air rifle standing mixed SH2 event.

With the competition for places fierce, Davies has Rio in his sights and does not have a definite plan in place for the next few years to come.

"I just need to concentrate everything on Rio at the moment, and then take it from there," he added.

"I could look at coaching in the future, or look at going to Tokyo but I am 100 per cent committed to Rio at this point."

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Shooter Richard sets his sights on double target

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Glassboys back in hunt for play-offs

Stourbridge 2 Stamford 0

STOURBRIDGE climbed back into the play-off places after pulling off a deserved win over strugglers Stamford on Monday night.

The Glassboys made all the running in the first half but had to wait until the 35th minute before taking the lead when livewire left winger Chris Lait cut inside and delivered a delightful curling shot which flew home beyond the reach of a full stretch Stamford goalkeeper Paul Bastock.

George Bowerman blazed over the crossbar when well placed to score following a lovely four man move that pulled Stamford's defence apart.

Little had been seen of Stamford as an attacking force in the first half and they rang the changes at half time by bringing on all three substitutes, but it had little effect as Glassboys goalkeeper Matthew Gould was rarely threatened.

Stourbridge had to wait until the 87th minute before they finally put the game to bed, Justin Richards rifling in a dangerous cross which Bastock couldn't hold and the lurking Ashley Vincent, who'd replaced Bowerman in the 75th minute, made no mistake from the second attempt.

Stourbridge boss Gary Hackett was delighted to come away with victory at Ashton United on Saturday as they maintained their promotion bid.

The 3-2 win ended a three-match winless run on the road.

Goals for George Bowerman, Daniel Scarr and Karl Hawley gave the visitors a three-goal lead heading into half-time.

Ashton scored twice to give Hackett's men a late scare, but they held on.

Hackett said: "We fully deserved to win. "Every game is key at this stage in the season and we know that we're under a lot of pressure at the moment."

Rushall stay in the play-off hunt with win at neighbours

Halesowen Town 1 Rushall Olympic 3
RUSHALL kept their lingering play-off hopes alive with a convincing victory over near-neighbours Halesowen.

The hosts failed to extend their recent good form and the first half belonged to Rushall with home goalkeeper Dan Platt forced into making an early 10th minute save from Andre Brown. It was no surprise when Rushall's Alex Reid burst down the left wing and crossed for man-of-the-match Mitchell Tolley to steer superbly into the net after 14 minutes.

The Pigs doubled their lead when Reid swept home in the 34th minute after Tolley played a great ball for Josh McKenzie to deliver a left-wing cross.

Rushall goalkeeper Kieran Preston was barely troubled, although Dan Sweeney fired just over the bar in the 43rd minute and a more energetic Halesowen created second half chances.

Kris Taylor met Tolley's pass and cut in to stroke past Platt from 10 yards to make it 3-0 to Rushall in the 89th minute. Sweeney claimed Halesowen's consolation goal in injury time by rounding goalkeeper Preston to fire home.

Curate's egg performance from Stour



James Rodley touches down his second try

Stourbridge 35 Chester 17

HAVING prevailed in the hard-fought reverse fixture played in driving rain back in late November, Stour side looked to bounce back from a hammering at the hands of Tynedale.

What resulted was a curate's egg of a performance, a sublime five-try second half securing the win but preceded by an error-strewn first 40 minutes.

Chester outside-half Rhys Hayes found an empty backfield with the Stour backs all lined up in attack to run 50m before feeding a scoring pass to winger Craig Ross and then converting

Rugby

within five minutes. Callum Bennett then slipped through for a second try and it was 12-0 at the break.

Joe Bridger reduced the deficit with a second half try, converted, and soon Stour led 35-12 thanks to converted tries from Josh Trinham, James Rodley (2) and Ash Elvers. Will Brown pulled one back at the death.

Stour's next fixture is away at Otley on April 9. The depleted Lions lost 29-3 at home to Camp Hill, with George Tildesley bagging a penalty.

Purchase is eyeing place in top three

CRADLEY'S comeback man James Purchase is setting himself a target of a top three place in the Heathens team.

Purchase, who hadn't ridden for a decade before returning to the sport with the National League side, won a race in the opening night win over Belle Vue last week.

Now he wants to continue the winning form when the Motor Market side face Rye House at Wolverhampton next Monday.

Purchase said: "The main thing for me is I just want to have fun, because if I'm doing that then I'll probably be riding pretty well."

"If I'm enjoying myself then I'd like to think I can, realistically, get my average up to around seven or eight points and be pushing the big guns in the third heat-leader role."

"I'm not going to put too much pressure on myself, I just want to enjoy racing again and hopefully the points will come. I was pleased to get that first meeting out of the way against Belle Vue, and it was nice to help the team start with a win."

"It was a decent start for me, I was happy to get that first race win and I've definitely got something to work with and build on now."

"I'll be looking to try and do a bit better against Rye House in the next meeting."

Despite being away from the sport for nearly a decade, Purchase hopes his past experience can prove helpful to the younger members of the Heathens side.

He said: "Hopefully I can pass some of my experience on to the younger riders, because even though I haven't ridden for a while I've been there and done it in a way."

"I've been riding in the National League as a youngster, I know how hard it can be and so I'd like to think I can pass some of the stuff I learnt years ago on to those guys."

"At the same time, I'm sure they'll be able to help me as well."

Neal early leader in Touring Car placings

MATT Neal claimed an early lead in the standings as the British Touring Car Championships kicked off at Brands Hatch.

The Stourbridge-born race ace finished third, second and fifth place over the opening three races of the year, enough to earn him a five-point lead over Honda team-mate Gordon Shedden in the drivers' standings.

★★★

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DK's Stefan Shillingford is grounded as he makes his way towards the posts

Tromans close to best half marathon time

DK Runners took part in the Midland Counties Road Relays at Sutton Park on Saturday.

With the men running 12 stages and the ladies six legs there was competition for places. With both entering A and B teams there were 36 places up for grabs.

The men's A team's final finishing position was 31st of 48

in a total time of 4.49.54. Late injuries meant the B team was a man short. They were given a total time of 5.16.45 but, as an incomplete team, were not given a finishing position.

The ladies race was over six stages with their long legs on the first and third stages. The A team finished in 39th place in 3.07.57. The B team came home

in 45th. Twenty four hours later Mark Gallimore recorded a time of 1.32.02 to place eighth in his age group and 371st overall in the Wimslow Half Marathon.

Helen Tromans was only seconds off a PB recording 1.28.40 to place third in the Warwick Half Marathon, where Liz Comley made her half marathon debut in 2.04.48.



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